Kamigoroshi no Eiyuu to Nanatsu no Seiyaku

(神殺しの英雄と七つの誓約)

Volume 02

Umetane
(ウメ種)

Story Description:

Three years ago, to defeat the Demon God who was trying to destroy this world, thirteen braves are summoned from another world. Each of them had varied ages and gender. Each of them was bestowed with cheat like powers not normal in this world.

One asked for indomitable will against any adversity.

One asked for god-like magic power.

One asked for a power to heal everyone.

One asked for a power to cook foods that will bring smile to everyone.

And so forth, each of them conveyed their wish and were granted what they asked for so that they could complete their quest. They

then departed, on adventure to defeat the demon god. For two years, they journeyed together and survived many hardships in this world, through joy, sadness, and discord; they persevered and in the end brilliantly defeated the demon god, brought peace to this world and then decided to live there. Among those thirteen, is one man that hid his whereabouts and disappeared after defeating the Demon God, but everyone would say:

It is he, the center of the thirteen braves, who is far more heroic than others.

It is he, who valiantly stands on the foremost line, protecting the others behind him.

It is he, the strongest man that killed the demon god.

And it is he, the only one who is blessed and loved the most by the goddess.

Original Story can be found here: Link

Chapter 12: Hero and the City of Magicians (1)

As we walked leisurely on the highway, the outer walls of the magic city finally became visible.

Finally feeling relaxed, the girl walking behind me exhaled deeply.

[Finally, we're here eh?]

"Don't say it like that. She's also trying her best."

The travellers coming from the Magic city looked at me dubiously as I talked to myself. But soon their gazes would turn towards Miss Francesca walking behind me.

"Are you fine?"(traveller)

"Eh, yes, I'm fine. Thank you for worrying about me."(fran) I doubt they were acquaintances yet they were worrying for her.

It took 10 days to get here. Sleeping outdoors at nights and walking all the time during the day. We did get to stop at inns twice during the journey but the fatigue won't disappear just by sleeping on a comfy bed once.

Her stamina should be at her limits already.

She's still walking somehow but her legs are slow.

While talking with the passing by travellers, she'd take a rest by stopping her legs.

[You could have at least carried her luggage for her.]

Don't say that. I lightly struck Ermenhilde inside my pocket.

If she's an adventurer, she'll have to learn to handle her own things.

After the travellers went away, Miss Francesca also began to walk again.

"Just a little bit more. Stay strong."(renji)

“Yes.”

Saying that, I also began to walk.

This girl is also very patient. During the 10 days we walked from that village to the Magic City, she didn’t complain even once.

Her pace started getting slower and slower day by day but she didn’t say anything like ‘take my luggage’ or ‘let’s take a rest’ even once.

At times her smile seemed to get clouded and sometimes distorted due to pain but that only made her look more favourable.

“Was the journey hard?”(renji)

Lining alongside her who was walking shakily, I asked.

Maybe she didn’t expect me talk to her, she looked at me with a hazy expression.

Her that stuck to her forehead due to sweat only made her look strangely erotic.

Am I also tired from the long journey? I shrugged my shoulders.

“This is the first time ever you’ve walked this much, right?”(renji) “Yes. It is the first time.”(fran)

But for some reason, she laughed happily.

Understanding her reason somewhat, I also became slightly happy.

Journeying with an objective. Completing that objective. You start to feel the connection between people. You start to greet random travellers, adventurers while walking.

That’s something which has faded away in the modern world that’s why I love travelling in this different world which makes me feel like that.

Maybe, Miss Francesca also began to like journeying for the same reason.

Thinking that, I also became happy.

I guess, I’m also still young.

[You sure are getting along.....]

“Is that so?”(renji)

It seems Ermenhilde-san’s mood isn’t very good for some reason.

It’s probably sulking because I’m talking to Miss Francesca.

Since it happens sometimes, I decided to leave it be. If I was alone with no one around it’d be fine but this is the highway near the Magic City and Miss Francesca was right beside me.

There were a lot of people around.

If I talked happily to a medal here, I’ll only be seen as a retard.

No, I might be treated as some dangerous individual as well.

“Well, as long as you gained some good memories, it’s fine.”(Renji)
“Yes!”(fran)

She looked at me with a wide smile this time.

That expression is really not fair. For a beauty like her to look at me with that kind of smile, I really think she’s too defenceless.

It’s not an expression you show to a man you started travelling recently. There’ll definitely be misunderstandings.

Getting a bit embarrassed, I shifted my gaze towards the Magic City in front of me.

Magic City Oufan.

As it name suggests, it’s a city filled with magicians who pursue magic, magic items and other similar techniques.

It’s one of the 4 major cities on the Imnesia continent.

Surrounded by huge walls, one would have to pass through one of the 4 gates under constant surveillance by soldiers in order to get in and out of the city.

To the east from here is the Royal Capital and further east of that is the Tactics City.

To the north of the Royal Capital is the Commercial Sciences City and to the south is the Steelworks City.

The Imnesia continent was made by the Roayl Capital in the centre, the 4 major cities in each direction and further branching countless villages.

Around the Commercial Sciences City, not just villages, but several well developed towns are also located.

I haven't gone that side much though so I'm not very clear about it.

"I had always admired what is called as a 'journey'."(fran) "It's pretty common among nobles."(renji)

[That's true. Nobles wanting to be adventurers are filled with so much admiration and aspirations that it gets troublesome.]

I was not going to say that much though. I ended up smiling wryly.

We crossed many noble adventurers but they were all people who didn't understand anything about being an adventurer.

Even though they were in the protection of their parents till now, they suddenly begin to travel the world without anything to try and make a living.

Well, without any aspirations, no one would try to become an adventurer either though, I think.

We were also the same. After getting summoned to this world, being made to fight something like a Demon God, but somewhere inside, we were still kind of happy.

A different world where we knew nothing. In the fights with monsters, even the quality of food was several levels below the current society.

At that time, it's amazing we actually accepted something so dangerous like subjugating the Demon God. Even if it was this world's goddess that asked us of it.

In that sense, the nobles who knew of this world better than us could be considered to have become adventurers with a much better reason.

There are those who become adventurers simply because they won't be succeeding their house as well.

"The world of adventurers is one where you won't move forward with just admiration alone."(renji) "Yes. I have learnt that perfectly well in the past 1 month."(fran) Saying that, Miss Francesca shrugged her shoulders while fixing her posture and luggage.

Seeing her actions that had become more adventurer-like than before, I laughed slightly.

"But still, I really had fun. In this adventure."(Fran)

"haha—-Something like this is still faraway from an actual adventure."(renji) This girl had only seen a remote rural area.

Attacked by goblins, subjugating Orcs, and had simply walked back to the Magic academy.

That's still nowhere near an actual adventure.

Elfreim, where the demi-humans live.

Abenelm, where the demons live.

Elves, dwarves, beastmen, fairies, spirits and many other races.

Demons and the Demon Lord and giant and strong monsters that don't live on this continent.

Golems as big as small mountains, demonic beasts. Serpents and krakens that can sink ships. Griffons and Dragons that rule the skies.

And—-the Demon God.

"An adventure is to risk life and death."(renji)

"fufu—-I had my hands full with just goblins though."(fran) "Well, that's true."(renji)

Normally, it is like that.

A single goblin would be a threat for a villager. That's how dangerous this world is.

But I think, exactly because it is such a world, the bonds between people are strong and every day you feel truly alive and even walking like this while journeying seems so much fun.

Passing through strangers on the highway. Since the population of this world is not very high, you don't meet too many people either. In a place like Tokyo, nobody can imagine how many hundreds of people pass through you in a matter of seconds.

But even though there are so many people, how many of them would actually greet you?

Calling a random stranger, how many would reply with a smile rather than a suspicious gaze?

Cars, trains, airplanes.

They're convenient but we know how the world turns out due to pursuing too much convenience.

And, exactly because this world isn't that convenient, the bonds between people are this strong. This world feels much warmer exactly because of that.

Maybe that's why——-we chose this world.

It's not convenient. There's no internet nor any telephones.

It hurts when you get injured and you could die just because of slight negligence.

Even then, this world felt fascinating. Even though the danger to life was always by our side, still we thought of this world as much better.

"If it's Miss Francesca, goblins would soon be of no threat to you."(renji) "Is that so?"(fran)

"Probably."

".....you're supposed to say 'absolutely' or any other such word there....."

I looked away from Miss Francesca who was grumbling and looked to

the front.

The gate to the city was in front of us.

There was an inspection for entering and about 10 people were standing and waiting for their turn to come. Everyone had to pass through it. Well, we shouldn't have any problem.

Joining the line, I sighed.

"With this, we'll finally be done eh?"(renji)

"Sorry for all the trouble."(fran)

Even though she had been tired till now, she's laughing energetically now.

Our destination––or rather, she must have felt relaxed to have reached the place where she lives.

"Well, it is my job after all."(renji)

[You're not being honest.]

Saying that, I shrugged my shoulders.

"Job, is it?....."(fran)

Ermenhilde's fed up voice and Miss Francesca's slightly sad voice.

But, I had no other way to describe it. Job, request. All that's left is to get my reward.

I don't hate nobles but I don't really want to get involved with them either.

I simply want to leisurely live as an adventurer in this world. For now, at least.

I don't want to involve myself in troublesome things.

That's why––

"Yes, job. Well, I had fun with my job since the other party was a beauty though."(renji) "....Mouu"

Miss Francesca blushed at being called a beauty.

She really is cute.

[You're making a sloppy face.]

"Well, I was born with it."

As I sighed, I lightly hit Ermenhilde inside my pocket with my finger.

Seriously……my partner is such a smooth-talker.

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The Magic City had changed quite a bit since the time I last visited.

We had stopped quite a bit of times during our journey to subjugate the Demon God but at that time the city felt less energetic and also had less people, I think.

Also, there were lesser demi-humans and beastmen back then as well.

But now, the main street was filled with lots of people, the stores and stalls were lively, and there were many different species other than humans walking down the street as well.

Unlike a rural village, I felt overwhelmed from the lines of stone-made houses and buildings along the streets.

……I must have gotten a bit too used to the atmosphere of a village.

And, the ones walking on the street were Elves, famous for hating humans.

Fairies, with a total size of about 10cm.

Beastmen, whose some part of the body was similar to some animal.

After the Demon God had been killed, the differences between the various races had also been resolved somewhat.

Also, the threat to this world—the threat of monsters had not been removed either as of yet.

With the subjugation of the Demon God as a chance, they must have

begun to compromise with each other slowly.

I slightly felt regret the fact that for the past half-year, I had been moving around only rural villages.

.....but, there are many beastmen in a human city. And they're laughing. Walking alongside humans. To be able to see this scene, I feel that there really was a meaning behind our journey. I laughed that it wasn't useless.

"In the time I didn't visit, it really has changed."(renji) [You're talking like a country bumpkin now.]

"Well, I did spend most of the time in villages recently."

Saying that, I shrugged my shoulders.

But, leaving aside beastmen, for even elves and fairies to be here, I'm surprised.

As I looked around the surroundings, I really did look completely like a country bumpkin. I couldn't refute that fact no matter what. Even my clothes matched that.

As the surrounding gazes focused on me for a second, I became embarrassed and stopped surveying everything.

"I'll return to Albana Magic Academy for now but what will Renji-sama do?"(fran) "nn.....for the time being, I'll just find a random inn and rest, I guess?"(renji) While looking at the crowd, I replied so.

Well I did come all the way to Magic Academy after all, it'll be a waste to leave already.

My wallet is filled as well. It won't be bad to think of the next journey while eating delicious meal with alcohol.

Also, I need to talk about the black Orc as well.

Though I don't want to bring too much trouble for Souichi and other who are comfortably living as students either. I did have such adult-like or rather, guardian-like thinking as well for once.

In the worst case, it'll end up with asking them for help but I do want children to live as children.

It's an adults job to take care of troublesome things.....even if it ends in failure.

While thinking that, I guess I really have to show up at the Royal Capital. Utano-san.....is like 'that' so I should at least meet Toudou for once.

I also need to think about the journey as well——

"Well, I'd be in Oufan for the time being. If anything happens, bring a request to the guild."(renji) For the time being. I won't stay here very long though.

When I said that, her expression suddenly became very bright.

"Which inn will you be....."(fran)

"Well, it'll be some cheap inn somewhere. As usual."(renji) [I want to sleep on a better bed for once.]

The quality of bed doesn't even matter to you. I don't know whether you're a metal or not but you're still a medal.

As I gave tsukkomi inside my mind, I shrugged. My partner medal really acts like a human sometimes.

I'm not really the type to fuss about the inn. As long as it's cheap and can prepare meals, I'm good with it. It's such a big city, there should be some inn with a bar as well.

"Then, we might meet again as well."(fran)

"that's true. Well, if there's a chance, let's meet again."(renji) Saying that, we parted. That's all there was. There were no any lingering attachments.

I don't have a stiff thinking like it was a once-in-a-lifetime encounter or something. I took a job and got my reward. We met, parted and might meet again.

Since we're both in the city, there's a chance we'd meet again.

Even after I leave this city, we might meet again if she continues to live as an adventurer.

Like I said before, she might request another job as well.

The world is vast but the bonds between people don't disappear that easily.

That's the kind of world—-this world is.

"In the end, nothing happened."(renji)

[Don't you hate trouble? Aren't you happy?"]

On hearing that, I could only shrug my shoulders again.

"Well, troublesome things don't happen that easily, I guess?"

[A trouble would be trouble only if you get involved in it but if you don't, it's only someone else's problem after all.]

"That's true as well."

I agree with that.

And, I don't have the hobby of getting close to other people's problems. It's a different thing if I'm getting a reward though.

For the time being I want to enjoy some luxury while wallet is still fat.

[So? Where are we heading?]

"A place which has both inn and a bar."

I think I heard a sigh from inside my pocket but it was probably just my imagination.

Interlude 3: The Girl's Day (2)

What kind of person do you think Renji Yamada is?

If you'd ask 10 people, all 10 of them would answer – [A Hero]. The ultimate Hero. Saviour. One of the 13 God Slayers summoned from another world to save this world.

Black haired and black eyed like all others from the other world, he had an excellent personality and never abandoned those in need.

Likes children, and it is said that he looked after all the other heroes that were in their teens when they were summoned.

The royalty trusted him a lot, and it was popular belief that it was him that helped strengthen the bonds with the Elfreim continent where a different race lived.

There were even rumours that the Priests that were directly gifted by their God, the Spirit God, held feelings more than just trust for him as well.

The hero who was entrusted with the [Gift], the Goddess' sword [Ermenhilde], by the Goddess Astraera.

He was skilled with the sword and combat, and above all he was diligent and modest as well.

It is said that he trained everyday before their journey started so that he could become as strong as possible.

The commander of the 1st Order of Knights of the Imnesia kingdom, the man called as the strongest knight, O'brien and his rival and friend, the commander of the 3rd Order of Knights, Cerbelie, both of them had been astonished by his level of diligence and his speed of growth.

Even in terms of knowledge, along with the GodSlayer known as the [Sage] [Witch], Yuuko Utano, he had had read all of the books in the royal castle which was an undeniable fact.

Everyone would say that he put in more effort in both training and

studies more than normal.

There were even those who said that the true Brave one was Renji Yamada and not Souichi Amagi who later on received the Holy Sword of the Goddess and was called as the [Brave].

He was the one who walked in front of the other 12 God Slayer, showed them the way, and continued fighting.

Refusing to surrender, getting rid of the despair; the bards sing that even the Demon God was afraid of his attitude.

In truth, he fought one-on-one with the Demon God that had surpassed human understanding and some say that he even made the Demon God retreat.

He did not fear the Demon Lord, he did not fear the Dragon, he was the Hero that crossed swords with the Demon God and finally killed him.

Even as a God Slayer, he received the affection of the Goddess and was the one who received the highest level of Divine Protection from her.

With the jade-coloured Divine Sword in his hands, protected by the divine protection of the Goddess, he is the great Hero who saved the world.

And, after the Demon God was subjugated———he hid his whereabouts.

Many say that he returned to his old world, or that he is still fighting the armies of the Demons or that he's now living happily with the goddess.

The Royal Family had hid the truth and had not been told to anyone.

The bards sung about various endings but the truth was still unknown.

The only ones who knew the truth were royal family, some of the nobles, and the remaining 12 God Slayers——.

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It has been three days since I, Francesca Barton, returned to the Albana Magic Academy.

My journey with Renji Yamada-sama. He taught me the basics of journeying and even helped me with completing my task.

The journey had only lasted 2 weeks but these 2 weeks were definitely the most shocking time of my life.

Hero. One of the 13 summoned from another world to kill the Demon God. The God Slayers.

I still can't believe how social, and easy to talk to he was.

I always thought that he'd be more formal and strict type of person.

And also, he was very strong. Let alone Goblins, he wasn't afraid of even more than 10 Orcs. I still remember his back as he faced them bravely.

The moment when Renji-sama killed the Orc that could use magic, he really felt like a hero from the fairy tales.

Black Flames that seemed like they could burn up even the soul. I, who had been captured by the Orc. And Renji-sama stood in the way of those flames to protect me.

In his hands was the jade green Divine sword of the Goddess, [Ermenhilde]. He had obliterated that magic with simply the magical energy being released from him.

I had travelled with that Renji-sama and had completed my test.

.....and there was a slight change in my school life.

"Good morning."

Giving a greeting, I entered the classroom.

Ancient and honourable school is good and all but the old-fashioned sliding door really makes a loud sound on being opened.

Due to that, the classmates talking in loud voices suddenly focused towards me.

"Go, good morning....."

Getting a bit surprised, I gave a greeting once again.

My cramped voice.....didn't really come out properly. My heartbeat grew faster a bit I think.

While I wondered if someone would say something, everyone's gazes soon turned away from me.

Breathing a sigh in relief, I entered the classroom.

Some of my close classmates greeted me and I greeted them back.

"Say, Francesca-san."

"What is it?"

As I sat on my seat, one of my close classmates called to me.

Yesterday I hadn't been able to answer properly due to muscular pains but I have calmed down a bit today.

Some parts of my body still hurt here and there but I answered with a smile.

"That.....the test this time, is it true that you took it along with Yamada-sama?"

"Eh, ah, yes."

The change in the gazes of my classmates.

That change was because of the fact that I had travelled with Renji Yamada-sama, one of Heroes.

That topic had soon spread all over the school.

I had pleaded the teachers to not reveal it too much because Renji-sama, for some reason, had told me that he didn't want to stand out too much.

.....but it ended up spreading in the end though. Is this my fault? I should not have revealed his name so easily.

The details of my test. The subjugation of Orcs.

There was no problem there. I did succeed. But the number was 10 of

them. Along with a new species that could use magic. There was no way that teachers would have believed me.

They didn't say that lying but they persistently asked how I had taken down so many of them.

On being asked, I ended up telling them about Renji-sama as well. I had even ended up telling them about Ermenhilde-sama.....yeah, this is my fault.

I hope this doesn't turn into a serious matter but my stomach hurts a bit. I owe him for saving me and helping me.

I really don't want to cause any trouble for him.....haah.

"I was saved by Renji-sama."(fran)

"Then that rumour was true?!?"

"Eh, yes.....though I don't know what kind of rumour is going around."

The classmate raised her voice happily. Due to that, once again the gazes of my classmates focused here. This is embarrassing.

Any information about Renji Yamada-sama was scarce. His name, appearance and personality———other than that nothing else was known from the past 1 year.

No other information about him had appeared. Neither to villagers nor to the nobles.

There were rumours that he alone had gone back to his own world, or that he was giving burial to the loves ones he had lost during the journey, or that her was living happily with the Goddess.

But in truth, it seems he had simply continued journeying.

Any info regarding such a Hero would definitely become a huge topic in the school.

I had been saved since I was having muscular pains yesterday but I have been asked the same thing countless times from the morning, even at the dorm.

About Renji-sama. His personality, what things he liked, things he hated, what had he been doing till now.

In just two weeks, there was no way I'd learn so much about him though. But I couldn't answer something randomly so I had to tell them truthfully that I knew nothing.

It's really true but……one guy even said that I was monopolising the info about Renji-sama.

Even though, I myself want to know such things.

"He was a sociable guy. During our journey, he took care of me as well after all."(fran) "Isn't that because Francesca-san is a beauty?"

"……I doubt that's it though."

I had no idea how to reply to that so I could only give a wry smile.

It was a fact that during our journey, or while sleeping outdoors, I did feel Renji-sama's gaze at times.

But, he never laid his hands on me, in fact his presence alone made me feel safe.

Was that what you'd call a natural virtue or was I simply too softhearted, I don't know.

But remembering him calling me a beauty, my heart beat grew a bit faster.

Well, from Renji-sama's point of view, it was either a joke or he was making fun of me.

"Can you tell me more about your journey later?"

"Umm——-"(fran)

I was at a loss for words but the teacher, a middle-aged woman, came into the class at a perfect time.

"The teacher is here."(fran)

"Oh…..then, see you later."

I didn't know whether to consider myself lucky or to sigh at the fact that this conversation will continue.

For some reason, Renji-sama didn't like being called and treated as a Hero.

Even after subjugating the Orcs, he gave all the credit to me and he himself had been satisfied and happy with just drinking some alcohol.

Even though he's so much more amazing than someone like me, but everytime I said that, he'd laugh and say that it wasn't like that.

I think he's just being modest.

He doesn't boast at all and was always worried for me instead.

And, even I'm not an idiot. I may be ignorant of worldly matters but it's not like I know nothing at all.

14 Orcs.

The expense incurred in killing them is not a few a gold coins.

One-by-one might not be that difficult but for facing more than 10 Orcs at the same time, there was a need for the Knight Orders to take action.

The expenses for that won't ever be just a few gold coins. There's a chance that the reward alone would be in silver coins.

But even then, Renji-sama only asked for 4 gold coins total. Even selling those Orcs would have gotten him double that amount.

I'm sure he probably realized that the villagers won't be able to pay him that much but still, the amount he asked for was especially less.

And, half of it had been given to me who was basically useless.

He even taught me how to fight and how to use my magic. Let alone being of use to him, I had ended up getting caught due to lowering my guard, but still I had received half of the reward.

It was my first income that I earned as an adventurer, that too along with the Hero Renji-sama.

Those two gold coins have become my treasure now. It's really precious

to me.

The Academy had apologised for not being able to arrange proper adventurers for my help but now I'm actually thankful for that.

Thanks to that, I was able to experience something irreplaceable.

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And there was another change in my academy life.

That was, after the classes ended.

"Francesca-senpai!"

"Hello Souichi-kun. Thank you for coming to the class."(fran)

"No, please don't mind it."

"No need to be so formal towards me."(fran)

The class became noisy.

That was not because the classes had ended. It was because the [Brave] had come to their class.

The fact that I had travelled and taken a request along with Renji-sama had of course reached the ears of the [God Slayers] Souichi-kun, Yayoi-san and Aya-san.

They come to me instantly and asked about Renji-san.

"Hello to Yayoi-san as well."(fran)

"Yes, hello Francesca-senpai."

Souichi-kun and Yayoi-san. Souichi-kun wasn't very tall and Yayoi-san was tall for a girl, so together they seemed like twins. As a man and a woman they had differences but if they were to wear the same clothes.....won't it be difficult to recognise who's who?

These two were brother and sister and really got along well. Since they had similar appearance, Souichi-san would look very similar to Yayoi-san

if he grew out his hair.

I also had two elder sisters but I couldn't really say that we got along well.

Or rather, we don't really interfere with each other's lives.

The eldest sister who'll inherit the house, the middle sister who has business skills and so our parents have a lot of expectation from her, and then there's me who has a meagre talent in magic.

After graduating, I'll probably have to marry some noble or some famous merchant family.

Then, at least till that time, I decided to live as freely as possible so I came to the Magic Academy. I know that I have asked for a big favour from my family.

They didn't say it out loud but I'm sure that they'd have wanted me to have a more safe school life.

After coming to this school, I have only been able to visit my home at the bare minimum.

Once in a month, a letter from my parents would come so I think I might be making them worry for me. Though the contents of the letters are always – come back soon or about marriage interviews etc.

Since it's a bit awkward at my own home, I feel happy on seeing them both like this.

"Aya-san didn't come together today?"(fran)

"Aya, she went to the guild today to put in a request……"(souichi)

"Aya-san did?"

Souichi-kun said that while inkling his head to a side, as if troubled.

Aya Fuyou-san. She is another one of the [God Slayers] in the school and is a famous magician with the title of [Grand Magus].

Honestly speaking, I have no idea why an amazing magician like Aya-san would attend school now.

It's a fact that Aya-san is actually more skilled than even the teachers at this school. She is talented enough to even decipher sealed magic grimoires.

Even the teachers are worried about how to handle her, and it's become a situation where they can't say anything no matter what she does.

She herself isn't a bad person but due to her abilities and titles, she ahs been unable to make friends of her own age.

Even with skills and experience, teachers would still look down upon youngsters, which is one of the bad aspects of this school. So even among the teachers, there were many who hate—-well, not that much but still there were many who didn't really like her.

But it was a fact that she had the skills. And along with the title of [God Slayer], there was no one who could say anything to her.

Also, it was the royal family that recommended entering her into the school. There was no way anyone would cause any trouble with her.

But still, I couldn't understand why the [Grand Magus] would go as far as to request something from the guild.

A magician of my level has no choice but to depend on someone but if it's her, she could do anything, is what I think.

"Well, when we asked about Renji-niichan from you, Francesca-senpai, you said that you had requested him to take the request from the guild right?"(souichi) "Eh, yes. That's true."(fran)

"So, Aya-chan has been putting up requests at the guild from yesterday so that she can catch Renji-niichan."

"I see."

Somehow, she's really cute.

Aya-san gives an image of a strong-willed person.

Slanting eyes, and always walks around proudly, and also keeps on shouting at Souichi-kun always……

Probably, it's something normal for them and they're just being playful I think.

But even so, to be like that inside the school, she really gives an image of strong willed person.

And she is currently going to the guild after classes just so she could meet Renji-san.

The Magic City Ofan has many districts/areas.

The Noble district where nobles live.

The commerce district where merchants put up there shops.

The academy district where the magic schools and Alchemy workshops are located.

The pleasure district where inns, bars and other places for enjoyment are located.

These four are the major ones.

There's a lot of distance between the commerce district where the guild is and our Albana academy which is in the academy district.

Going there after classes means that it'll be really late time.

But even so, Aya-san went so that she could meet him, we could only smile wryly at that.

"Just like Francesca-senpai had told, Aya-chan actually put up a proper request for gathering medicinal herbs."(souichi) "Somehow, she really is cute. I thought she was more strong willed type of person."(fran) "No.....she really is a bit to strong minded...."(souichi)

As Souichi muttered that in a tired tone, I smiled wryly. Yayoi-san also looked at Souichi-kun with a worried expression.

For her elder brother to being unable to match a woman, as a younger sister she really might have things to say.

This was another one of the changes to my school life.

Due to the topic of Renji-sama, I was able to become friends with

Souichi-kun and other [God Slayers].

“Cut is that fine? Coming just to talk to me, you don’t have anything else to do?”(fran) “haha……everyone says that but neither me nor Yayoi have anything special to do.”(souichi) “Is that so?”(fran)

“Yes. Both me and Onii-chan are normal students for now after all.”(yayoi)

Normal students, for now.

Those words that left Yayoi-san’s mouth naturally showed their status.

Souichi-kun, Yayoi-san, Aya-san.

Even though they are all younger than me, those three are bearing the heavy burden as God Slayers and as devout heroes.

And Renji-sama——-I remembered him saying that he wasn’t a hero.

Hero. That title was very heavy. Much more than what I think.

While being surrounded by gazes full of admiration and inquisitiveness, still Souichi-kun and others continued their lifestyle as normal students.

Other Heroes were all working for the country in some way or the other.

Renji-sama. He alone, without the support of the country, without the fame of a God Slayer——was going around saving people he didn’t know at all while roaming from village to village.

For a reward that’d be small for even an adventurer, he saved a noble like me who knew nothing.

I heard from Souichi-kun and others but it seems that he’d been living like that for the whole past 1 year.

I wonder who could actually do that.

Even though one could live without any troubles if he worked for the country as a hero. But rejecting that, he went around saving villages in rural areas.

That truly was the life style of a genuine [Hero]. That’s why Souichi-kun and others laughed happily and proudly when I talked about Renji-sama.

“For now, is it?”(fran)

“Yes, for now.”(yayoi)

Saying that, both Souichi-kun and Yayoi-san laughed.

It was a smile fitting their ages and didn’t one feel the burden as a hero and a god slayer they were carrying. Even I felt happy.

It was such a smile.

“Soon, there’ll be the last selection for the fighting competition so I’m free till then.”(souichi) “Oh, right……”(fran)

“Francesca-senpai, you should also give your best.”(yayoi)

“Thank you very much Yayoi-san.”

The last selection for the fighting competition. Only 5 will be chose. 2 have already been decided.

With a little more effort, I could also get selected as a participant. If I could fight alongside those 2, I’ll finally have a definite meaning for coming to this school.

Born as a noble, I had a duty to live as a noble as well. I have no objections to that since I think the same.

But, I want to leave with something tangible. Not as the noble Francesca Barton but as an adventurer and as a student of Albana Magic Academy.

That’s why I had not realized it yet.

The fact that I got close to these 3 [God Slayers].

The fact that I had travelled with the Hero Renji Yamada, and had defeated Orcs with him.

The meaning behind it and just how would that be looked upon.

Chapter 13: Hero and the City of Magicians (2)

As I stepped outside the thick forest, I could suddenly see the wide blue sky as if the world itself had changed.

Since the sun was bright, I covered my eyes with my hand and slightly squinted due to the light. Maybe because my action felt somewhat funny, the handsome young man that took the request with me slightly loosened his cheeks.

Thought it was just that, his smile also suddenly felt as bright as the shining sun.

So this is what an actual handsome man is like, I sighed inside my mind. I wonder if this was jealousy I felt.

But still, even though his gender was the same, I still felt that he looked beautiful.

“Thanks for guiding me around the forest. If something happens, I’ll be counting on you again.”(renji) “I’m just happy to have found a human that also treats forests preciously as well.”

On his flowing golden hair was a plain circlet with a jade embedded in the centre.

Every time the wind blew slightly, his golden hair flew around and it felt as if my whole vision had been covered with gold.

Blonde hair and blue eyes. A well-featured appearance and tall height. Wearing green clothes from head to toe, he also wore a deep wooden coloured mantle to help him slip into the forest.

And above all, the most striking feature were his pointed ears.

Elf. The protectors of the forest, as called by the country of Spirits. An Elf, who supposedly hate humans, was standing in front of me and smiling.

Even though he’s a guy, his smile still slightly raised my heartbeat.

Even though I'm normal and like only women.

"Treating forests preciously or whatever, I don't really know about that. I simply want to avoid damaging the area in my own way."(renji) "That alone is enough. Humans and Dwarves, cut down forests more than required but you are different."

"Well, I wonder. I don't think my any different from a normal human though."(renji) Saying that, I shrugged my shoulders.

Elves hate humans. That was common sense in society. Even I think it's like that. And in fact, we never really had any kind of conversation even after taking the request at first.

There are many theories as to why Elves hate humans but I think it's because humans cut down a lot of trees.

Even if they don't cut trees there were many vast plains. Considering Imnesia's population, there'd be no problem in finding places to live.

But even then, humans would cut down forests and expand their own territory.

Animals are chased out of their homes, the ecosystem collapses, and the resentment gives birth to monsters.

Cleared away forests become turned into distorted territories of monsters. The maddened forests become a living place for monsters. These habitats of monsters further invite more monsters and the weak monsters become prey to the stronger ones. And this leads to the birth of an even more powerful monster.

That's the complaint Elves have been giving. That it was the humans and the Dwarves that were giving birth to more and more monsters.

The excuse from humans was that trees/wood is a necessary ingredient in building houses, is used as a fuel and is also required in making daily necessities like furniture etc.

Though iron manufacturing was pretty high levelled here, it still needed fire to be made use of which comes from wood. After all, there are no

scientific fuels in this different world.

Wood was something that was absolutely needed in the daily life of humans.

Both sides' opinion could be said to correct. That's why, even now Elves and Humans maintained a certain distance between them.

That gap was not something I could fill up, and neither do I feel like doing something like that. Humans and Elves. Restoring and mending relationships between different races was the job of the royalty.

"But well, it'd be nice if they could at least individually get along sometimes."(renji) "Well I wonder about that. Even I am not really friendly with humans after all."

"That's fine."

There's a skill to getting along with someone.

What should one do to get someone you hate to work with you? There may be no correct answer to that but you can't say that every method is wrong either.

In my case, I think I try to make the other person interested in the individual called Yamada Renji as a single person. The only reason why Elves and Humans hate each other is because they simply don't try to understand each other, I think.

And true enough, I barely know anything about this elf beside me. I only know what I've read in books and what I've heard from other people.

Elves are called as the people of the forest and treasure nature above all.

But the truth might not be exactly what the books say. But to be called as the people of the forest, it's clear that they hold much more interest and love for forests than humans do.

For example, the way of walking in the forest. I don't know which way is correct but I at least try to be careful to not step on roots or greenery.

I try to focus on walking on bare ground or weeds as much as I can.

For example, the way of defeating goblins. So that their blood doesn't contaminate nature, use bare hands instead of knives, that too, use surprise attacks to finish them with a single blow on their necks.

In time, their corpses will return to the earth and become food for the animals in the forest. But the equipment worn by these goblins is different.

So, I took them off and recovered. Well, I plan to sell it after reaching the city though. It's an important source of my income after all.

Ermenhilde called me a [Bandit] and whatnot but it's for money.

After I did all that, the elf took some interest in me. In what I was doing. Well, from an Elf's point of view I might have seemed like some eccentric.....well, anyone would see me as an eccentric, I think. Ermenhilde sighed who knows how many times due to that.

After gaining his interest, I explained my actions and then explained that I was also interested in an Elf's sense of values.

When I told that I was interested, the other party would also automatically generate some kind of interest in me.

"I'll be happy if humans like you who treat forests preciously would increase."

"Me too. Nature is meant to be cherished."

And, never deprecate something the other party holds dear.

For an Elf, it's nature. For a Dwarf, it's earth, and his smithy.

Anyone would be irritated if someone were to speak badly of something you hold dear. As long as you can abide by that rule, you'll automatically gain the goodwill of the other person.

That's how you socialise with someone.

Be ready to compromise somewhat. Be the one who starts a conversation once. Be the one to extend your hand. It's something very obvious.

“Then, human. If it’s in our fates, let us take a job together again.”

“Yeah, I’ll be counting on you at that time once more.”(renji)

Saying that, the handsome elf returned back into the forest.

The objective was to subjugate goblins inside the forest.

Mine was to collect materials for alchemy inside the forest.

Doing both the requests together, today’s earnings should be pretty great.

My mood became better. After I confirmed that the Elf had disappeared deep into the forest, I breathed a sigh.

[Rather than being over considerate towards others, won’t it be fine if you simply stay indifferent?]

“That’ll be even more tiring. Journeying together without any conversation would be hell.”

[Renji, you have me don’t you?]

“If I talked with you in front of other, people will treat me as a retard.”

[.....muu]

When I said that, Ermenhilde was unable to say anything back.

“It’s fun talking with you. But, it’s not cool to get the cold shoulder from others.”

[Then just make it so that everyone can hear me––]

“Not happening. I’ll stand out to much. Too much trouble.”

[So that’s the actual reason eh.....]

I shouldered the bag filled with the requested ingredients and the equipments of the goblins.

Inside my pocket were numerous fangs that’ll be the proof of subjugation.

Now then, how much will I earn today? The iron armour etc are pretty heavy but it’s more fun to think about the money.

.

.

.

“As expected, you earn much more in a city eh?”(renji)

[.....I wonder why I feel like crying.]

It seems Ermenhilde is still not happy of the fact that I was took armour from goblins. While ignoring Ermenhilde’s voice, I sat down on one of the provided chairs in the guild and took a look at the memos in which requests were written.

Today’s earnings have been 35 copper coins. It’s an amount that won’t appear in a rural village’s guild. Cities sure are nice, really.

Well, if you properly subjugate monsters, you can earn at least 1 gold coin everyday. But it’s super tiring so I won’t.

Thinking that, I once again felt that adventurer really is a profitable job. It showed why this occupation won’t die out even though there’s a constant threat to the life of the person.

“I want to keep on earning like this for some time.”

[I want to kill more monsters if possible.]

You’re too violent, partner. Lightly hitting Ermenhilde inside my pocket, I turned the pages of the memos.

I’m looking for an ingredient collecting job with a good reward.

Since this is the Magic City, there were many ingredient gathering requests for magical experiments that stood out but there’s also danger involved in them as well. If only they were something easy like gathering herbs. I sighed.

The ingredients used in magical experiments were mostly things that possessed magical energy inside them. That too, the quantity alone wasn’t important, the purity of magical energy was also important apparently. Though, I’m not really knowledgeable in that aspect.

In the first place, I'm bad with things like alchemy and modern science experiments. Rather than thinking too much while sitting in front of a desk with a flask, I prefer to go and move around my body. But, I'm not a muscle-headed idiot, I think. I want to think that way at least.

By the way, the ingredients I gathered today is called spirit grass.

It wasn't some normal grass that was used to make ointments etc but could actually restore magical energy if boiled and drunk so it was wanted as an ingredient for alchemy.

These miraculous things grow in sacred grounds––or rather, the so called power spots.

True the rewards are nice but in such places monsters are strong as well. Maybe because they are feeding on such herbs or maybe it's simply because of staying in such power spots, these monsters are strong and tough. Sometimes there are even some which have huge bodies. If I were to speak in game terminology, even a goblin would be of a much higher level.

So it was obvious that the reward was high. That's why I was looking for requests that were safe yet gave good rewards.

"Which one should I accept?"

[If you're not going to be particular about it, does it even matter what you pick?]

As I was hesitating, Ermenhilde's voice resounded in my head.

As if it's that simple! I rebutted inside my head. I may have some confidence with fighting but that's just that. With dangerous jobs comes the risk to my life. Unfortunately, I have no intention to take such a risk.

For some reason, everyone around me wants me to fight like a hero or something. It's really troublesome.

The number of times I almost died during the journey to subjugate the demon god. Just remembering it makes me feel sick.

Killing strong monsters is the job of brave and hero protagonists. And

unfortunately, I'm not one of them. That's why, no matter how much Ermenhilde demands me to, I could only shrug my shoulders.

"Oh, this one might be nice."

The one I found was a request the same as before, to gather spirit grass from the forest.

The reward isn't bad either. I think, I'll ask that elf again to guide me around that forest.

[You look like you're having fun.]

"I'm scared of danger after all."

[fuun]

I brought out Ermenhilde, who had started sulking, and patted the rim of the medal.

I want to find a way of life for you that is different from being just a weapon. Thinking that, I smiled wryly but it didn't reach my partner so no reply came.

Even though you have a proper consciousness and will, you still live like a weapon. Is it weird of me to think like that?

.....If I say that to Ermenhilde, I'll get scolded though.

But really, I want to treat Ermenhilde not as a weapon but as a partner.

"It's the best if you can earn money safely, you know?"

Near the city there's an old forest which is called as the forest of magical energy. It's the place where I went together with that handsome Elf just a while back.

The trees were thick and as the name suggested, it was a place filled with magical energy. You can get a lot of magical ingredients there but at the same time the danger from monsters is also high.

The vegetation that has lived long enough attain life and become Treants and Mandragoras.

Mandragora—it's of the same type as the plant that is called mandrake

in our world.

In this world, suitable for a fantasy world, it's a carrot-like monster with 2 legs and leaves on its head. On being pulled from the ground, it runs away at full speed.

They say that you'll die if you hear its scream but there's nothing like that. It's irritatingly noisy and will summon its friends though.

I remember that it took a lot of courage to pull it from the ground for the first time. My elf guide began to laugh at me for that. But I didn't feel embarrassed. It's the same for everyone for the first time.

"Mandragora, Alraune.....they're all troublesome ingredients."

[—it's the Magic City after all. Aren't these ingredients used for alchemy normally?]

Its voice was still sullen but it finally started talking back to me again so I once again patted the medal. There was no response. It seems it is still in a bad mood.

"Is there nothing which could be a bit safer?"

There are requests for gathering herbs to heal illnesses etc but all of them are cheap. I'll collect them during my journey and it'll be fine as long as there isn't some war suddenly or something.

But, Mandragora's leaves, seeds and roots. The places where these can be gathered are limited. Experiments can take place when war isn't going on as well. In fact, there are experiments that can only be done in safer times.

.....as expected, the bigger the city the more dangerous the jobs will also be.

What should I do? I flicked Ermenhilde with my thumb. It was tails. I ended up sighing.

"Let's stop here for today."

[You aren't taking any new jobs?]

“It’s dangerous alone after all.”

[There’s barely any job for an adventurer that doesn’t have any danger though?]

That’s true, I shrugged.

But it’s a fact that it’ll be dangerous alone. I have trouble against lot of enemies and not to mention that I’m not familiar with the forest. I’ll have to hire an Elf or a Ranger or I’ll have no confidence in returning back without getting lost.

I do have mapped the geography of the forest in my head but I really want to avoid any risk of getting stranded inside the forest and dying.

Thinking that, I turned the memos again.

“Oh.”

[Hm?]

Herb gathering. The reward was also good.

The details were to go to the entrance of the forest and gather some herbs.

It’s troublesome to gather herbs so the person put up a request in the guild to get someone to accompany them. The client really is whimsical.

Well I don’t really mind that so I checked the client.

“.....”

[What happened? Why did you stop talking suddenly?]

Client Aya Fuyou.

It’s name I definitely know. I closed the memo book.

“.....the client was Aya.”

[.....pfft.]

Don’t laugh goddamnit!

For some reason, it seems Aya knows that I’m in the city. She must have learnt that from Miss Francesca.

Since I never explicitly told her to not say anything, she must have talked about me as I was their fellow [God Slayer].

Well, I don't really mind that and neither do I find this way of looking for me through request bad either.

"But seriously, she really has a piece missing somewhere."

What would she have done if I had not noticed this request?

She should have simply put up a request to find me by name. Well, that'll be troublesome for me in its own way though. I don't want to stand out after all.

[Seriously, she really resembles you a lot.]

"……I'm not that careless/absentminded."

Probably. I whispered lightly.

I think heard Ermenhilde sighing but let's act as if I didn't hear that.

Aya. Fuyou Aya.

One of the God Slayers that travelled with me.

Called by some exaggerated name like Grand Magus, she the Hole Digging Magician no.1. No.2 is Miss Francesca……..I think.

Pitfalls are convenient so please popularize it.

"She really is giving a pretty big reward. It's almost double the normal."

[That's how much she wants to do a job with you, right?]

For some reason, Ermenhilde said in an amazed voice.

Did I do something bad? I don't remember doing or saying something like that though.

While unsatisfied, I tore out the memo and put it in my pocket.

The details were to gather herbs. The reward was 10 copper coins. It's an amount which is double of that of the market price.

I ended up sighing at that.

“As usual, she doesn’t have any idea about market prices either……”

She’d buy expensive things at their given rates and never tries to bargain. Well, from a merchant’s point of view that’s a good thing.

A normal herb gathering quest would give about 5 copper coins. She should have at least put it at 7 copper coins or something.

Someone else could have taken it before I even saw that, you know.

[Things like market prices, Renji doesn’t know them either.]

“There’s no such thing.”

[Are those the words of the man that sold a Mithril Sword dirt cheap? ……]

“I was having money troubles back then so that was fine.Yup.”

[….haah.]

In the first place, I have no use for a Mithril sword. It’s a waste of resources.

My skill with the sword is only slightly above the normal soldier. It could be a bit higher or lower than that though.

“Rather than that, it’s Aya’s request. Aya’s.”

[That’s right, it’s Aya’s request. Aya’s.]

It was a complete fed up voice. I’m used to hearing it but it still hurt me a bit.

“What should I do?”

[You won’t accept it?]

“No, I’ll accept..”

It seems she has been appearing many times after the classes were over so there might be many requests prepared that I might pick up I think. How cute. Though, I’ll die if I wasn’t the actual objective for this though. Out of sheer embarrassment.

I think, at least.

“But, will the reward increase if I wait till tomorrow again?”

[.....let alone being dropped inside a hole, nobody will complain even if you get burned to death or have lightning fall on you.]

Will I really have to face that?

It seems Ermenhilde really was worried about that so I felt a chill up my spine.

True, Aya has a low boiling point. She’s always getting angry at Souichi, or rather, hitting him.

It’s one thing if its just skinship between childhood friends but if you add magic into that, it’s a completely different thing. She really can make lightning fall on someone.

When all the men had tried to peek during the bath, one really fell upon us. It’s was a miracle that we weren’t burned to death as well. I alone was also especially lectured by Utano-san as well though.

It sure is troublesome to be an adult. I think. Don’t peek if there’s a woman’s bath. It’s a savage different world we’re living in, I think it’s fine to act without restraint sometimes. It helps clear your heart and mind, I think.

[You’re thinking about weird things again aren’t you?]

“.....are you an esper?”

I sighed.

“Well, let’s put Aya’s request on hold for now.”

I want to see how far the reward will increase. Well, not that I’d actually take the reward from her in the first place.

It’d be uncool for an adult to receive small change from a child.

That’s why, I’m putting Aya’s request on hold out of pure curiosity. For the time being, I’ll simply take the memos so that other adventurers don’t take it.

[If it’s Aya, she might even put up gold coins as a reward.]

“If that happens, I’ll get scolded by Utano-san the next time we meet.”

[Let’s hope it ends with just a lecture. Just be sure to give me to some other person when that happens.]

“.....We’re supposed to share each other’s pains and gains, partner.”

Saying that, I exited the guild.

Now then, I stretched my body. Though I was talking in whispers, I talked with Ermenhilde a bit too much so the gazes from others are hurting me a bit. The number of people inside the guild was less but it’s not like it was empty.

I really did it again, I felt depressed again.

“After earning a bit more, let’s go to the royal capital next.”

[Before that, be sure to meet Aya and the others, alright?]

“I know.”

I flicked my worrywart partner with my finger.

It was Heads. Yeah.

“It’ll be fine. We’ll meet.”

Well, it’s a bit awkward to meet them again after a one whole year though.

What should I talk about, how should I act, how should I greet them, etc.

Such anxieties are there, that’s why I might delay it a bit.

Chapter 14: Hero and the City of Magicians (3)

While hearing the sound of crackling bonfire, I yawned.

Ah, it's a nostalgic dream.

A black night with no street lights. We always spent the nights awake while sitting around the bonfire.

The children instantly slept due to the fatigue from travelling and only us who were above 20 kept awake while drinking.

Me, Utano-san, Toudou, Kuuki. Just us 4 adults. Rest were all young children but even then, those guys were more energetic and more hardworking than us adults.

We worked hard so that we can support them with all we had.

Utano-san with the knowledge she gained from the Goddess, Toudou with his cooking, Kuuki with his shield.

But, yeah, I remember.

On that day—-

"Renji-san, thank you for today."

"ah, no, in fact I should be the one to thank you."

Aya who was usually unsociable gave her thanks to me.

Who were our opponents.....an Ogre and a Cyclops, I think. I only remember that they were giant-type monsters.

For the first time, I used Ermenhilde's powers—-many of the covenants were cleared and I had taken down a large monster.

I was desperate so I don't remember it properly though.

At that time, Aya had an image of an always angry girl who kept on quarrelling with Souichi.

Well, it'd be weird to be calm even after something weird like getting

summoned to another world happened though. In fact, I myself had been wary of my surroundings for a week after getting summoned. I simply couldn't calm down.

That's why, I could understand Aya flaring up at not just me but everyone.

And that Aya had unusually come to apologise to me alone, and we had talked a lot through the night.

About each other, about this world, about what to do from here on.

The others, probably being considerate, had quickly gone inside the tent to sleep. They're probably listening us closely though.

That's the kind of people they are. Privacy was at minimum, but because they were such guys, I could get along with them.

While thinking that, I threw a dry stick into the fire.

When the conversation stopped, only silence remained. The sound wood cracking and the sound of trees rustling due to wind were the only sounds that remained.

Normally, I would be drinking along with others while planning what to do next right now but I can't really make a minor drink now, can I?

While I troubled myself over what to do, Aya would be considerate and bring up a new topic.

.....I really am a pathetic adult.

"I think Renji-san is amazing."(aya)

"I'm just desperate. From my point of view, Aya-chan or Souichi, you guys seem much more amazing."

And it was true as well.

15yrs old. Souichi's sister Yayoi-chan was only 14yrs old.

But even then, they were travelling to save the world. Normally, they'd be in middle school right about now.

They are much more amazing than me. If I was in their place, I might

have been whining and complaining. After all, they were 15yrs old. They're not a protagonist of a movie or game, to be able to even say that they'll save the world is amazing I think.

"There's no such thing. It's because Renji-san and Yuuko-san stay with us, we feel safe and nor insecure....."

"I see."

I threw another piece of dry wood into the fire.

At this moment, I think I was happy, no, I was definitely happy.

I worked hard, desperately, so that I don't become a burden to the kids, so that I can help them when they get stuck somewhere.

In our original world, just working hard alone wasn't valued.

Results were everything. And I had nor produced any kind of result in this world.

My skill with the sword was average. My cheat wasn't especially amazing. And my personality wasn't really great either. If I had to say, I was simply going with the flow.

But at this moment, on being told so by Aya,.....I was really happy. Even someone like me was able to reduce the anxieties of these children, even if only slightly.

No matter in what form, I was happy that I had been of use.

"You finally smiled."(aya)

"Eh?"

"You were always making a serious face till now. Renji-san, your expression can be scary."

Was I really making such a face? I may have been thinking about something too much which might have led to that.

Just the fact that I was the eldest, just that had become a heavy pressure on me.

"Is that so?"(renji)

“Yeah. You don’t seem too energetic and only talk much with Yuuko-san and the others.....”

After that, Aya pointed out all of my major shortcomings on her fingers.

In the end, she ran out of fingers and laughed while telling me to fix these things.

That I don’t talk much, always have a sour look, always go out too much in front against monsters, and always end up with many injuries.

I can’t help that. After all, I am the eldest here. I was the senior-most person here.——Just because I’m weak doesn’t mean I’ll hide behind children.

When I think about it now, I really was reckless.

And this time, Aya threw a piece of dry wood into the fire. Her face that shone from the light of the fire was, smiling.

But, I thought.

If she and others can smile like that, I don’t mind staying reckless. I thought that way. As a result, I almost died so many times though.

The smiles of my comrades and my life. If I were to place them on a scale, which would be heavier——-I didn’t even have to think. But the me of that time was really an idiot, I think.

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“My magic is too strong.”(aya)

“Yeah, that’s true.”

The scene changes.

We’re still in front of a fire but the places we’re sitting at are different.

That time, we sat while facing each other but now, Aya was sitting beside me.

Her expression was smiling so I think she's happy.

I wonder what time does this memory belonged to——-

"When it becomes a melee, I end up dragging everyone in it as well and if I start paying mind to that, I start having troubles with a single Orc."(aya) "Well, Aya-chan blows her fuse whenever you get backed to a corner."

"……was there a need to say that to my face directly?"

"Aya-chan sure is weak when you get cornered."

When I said that, Aya puffed her cheeks and got angry. After talking to her for a few times I understood but it's really fun to tease Aya. She gets angry but she doesn't hit me like she does with Souichi. She simply puffs her cheek and starts sulking.

Because that's too cute, I end up teasing her more. And as I kept on teasing her like that, I started to feel as if she were my younger sister. I don't really have a younger sister but if I had I might have talked to her like I did with Aya, I think.

It's weird if I say so myself but after talking to Aya like this I became better at conversing with the other youths as well.

My feelings to protect them since I am their elder still remain but I started to fight together with them or rather, I depend on them sometimes. Anyway, I feel that I became to fight alongside them rather than simply go away alone to the front.

I wonder what kind of change of heart this is.

"…..Aya 'chan' again."

"You're younger than me after all."

"mouu."

Seeing her expression that suits her age and not some stiff title like Hero or Godslayer, even I feel happier.

As I laughed, she got angry at me again. Puffing her cheeks she glared

at me strongly.

She won't attack me like with Souichi but her expression is clear.

But since that seemed even more amusing, I ended up laughing more. Even though she's a magician at a level that I could never reach, her actions show that she's definitely younger than me.

"Isn't it because you're too focused on flashy magics?"(renji)

"That may be so but……since my magical energy is too great, even with a little imagination, it turns into something excessive."

"Oh right, you consulted with Utano-san as well right?"

"Yes."

Utano-san. A person who wished to be able to use all kinds of magic.

Certainly, she's also a magician but almost everything else is different from Aya.

In contrast to the magic of this world that comes from imagination, Utano-san can simply use any magic directly as long it is recognised as an [existing] magic.

Basically, it's similar to the magic in games, RPGs, ADVs, and STGs. (T/N: I have no idea what ADV or STG is. Adv is probably short for 'Adventure' but I'm not sure.) And Aya's magic is like this worlds, using imagination and magical energy to manifest it.

Rather just being of different types, they are two completely different things.

Even though both are magicians, there's not just a wall or gap between them but a whole cliff.

"Then how about manifesting it in some other form rather than just flames or lightning?"(renji) "Like rocks or something? Then, I'll probably make giant rocks rain."

"……What the hell, that's scary."

"I still am working hard everyday you know?"

As expected of the magician that possess the highest level of firepower amongst us. The vector of working hard is so completely different, I ended up sighing.

Even though, here I am still getting desperate when killing a single monster.

“No, how about imagining something more simple? Not just flames, ice or rocks.”(renji) “What should I imagine then? Even if I imagine a kamaitachi it’ll turn into a tornado, you know?”(T/N: google kamaitachi if you don’t know what it is. It’s basically a sharp wind.) “Like I said, why is it always something so violent.....no, something even simpler.”

“More simpler?”

As she threw dry wood into the fire, her black hair shone crimson from the fire.

Finding that magically beautiful, I averted my eyes.

What the hell am I thinking about a child who’s almost half my age.

“Something like a pitfall, or using vines or plants to restrict the opponents like in the movies.”(renji) “.....that, in the end, wouldn’t defeat the monster.”

“It’s fine like that. If Aya-chan stopped the enemy’s movements, we’ll deal the finishing blow.”

With one of the branches, I drew a shitty goblin on the ground.

And after completing it, I slashed it with a diagonal line.

“Magic isn’t simply to defeat monsters. Stopping and constraining the enemy is also a perfect strategy.”(renji) Well, this girl has no shred of strategy and simply has brute power to crush all enemies though.

Completely different from me who’s trying hard everyday just to not fall behind others.

I feel envious at the same time feel relieved as well.

I don’t want such kids to travel while feeling the danger for their lives

like me. Well, everything is simply me reaping what I sowed.

The wish to the goddess. The weapon to kill God. It can definitely kill a god, but that's all it does.

It's a weapon only effective against Gods. It was nothing more than a normal weapon against other monsters, weak.....that's why, I was the natural enemy of the Demon God though. The demons would attack me, hate me, as if I killed their parents. Thanks to that, my life was in danger the whole time we were in the Demon continent.

I always regretted that I should I have wished for something more generic/all purpose power.

No use crying over spilt milk. They truly are great words.

"Un.....I guess that I should be able to easily imagine that."(aya) Without realizing my inner thoughts, Aya was thinking about how to make my idea work.

She's fast to hit but I think she's a serious and diligent girl. Her way of thinking is flexible and will create a magic which will far surpass what I originally imagined.

Grand Magus. She really is a genius that doesn't shame that title. This Girl, Fuyou Aya.

"Also, do you really feel no reluctance when.....killing living beings?"(renji) "——-"

As she heard that, her smile stiffened and looked up to me with surprise as if she was choking on breath.

I must have asked something I shouldn't have. It's an unnecessary emotion in this trip to kill the Demon God.

It could be said that it'll only be a hindrance, a useless emotion.

But that was only if nobody said or talked about it.

15yrs old. It's a sensitive time, in my opinion.

At such an age, even if it was to save the world, even if the enemy

weren't humans, even if the monsters were the enemies of humans, it'll be painful to take away the life of another, I think.

It's something I was meaning to ask Souichi and the others sooner or later as well.

It was simply because we started talking together more that I asked Aya first.

"But, it's to save this world....."

"Yeah."

It's a nostalgic memory.

I can't hear anything other than the crackling sound of fire and the buzzing of insects.

Even the sleeping breaths of my comrades, I couldn't hear them. The next morning, I remember being teased.

"___"

To kill a living being. To steal away life.

It's much more heavier than what it sounds like.

That doesn't change even if you have the excuse that you are doing it to save the world. For us who have only seen such things on TV, it was far too heavy.

But even so, Aya's words averted away from that fact. The duty to save the world.

If we don't kill the monsters, demons, and the Demon God, this other world will end. Countless people will die. That's why, kill. That's why we fight, that's the reason why we can fight.

The pressure was too heavy but Souichi and the others still took on that duty and continued journeying. Even though I worried about it everyday, my hands tremble everytime, and kept guard every night without sleeping.

For someone, for something, for the world, for comrades.

For me the pressure that came with the title of a Hero felt ridiculous.

I felt envious and jealous of them so much that I felt like averting my eyes——-Everyone was so bright and honest.

“Renji-san……will we able to return back to our world?”

“Un.”

“Will we able to return together?”

“We will.”

——after we kill the Demon God.

We were summoned to save this world. In novels and fairy tales, it’s something prestigious. Something that’d make your heart race, that’d make you excited and happy.

But in reality……..lifestyle was inconvenient, the food was terrible, your butt will hurt after riding horses, you legs would hurt if you walk. You still feel fatigued if you sleep outdoors. And even the beds at inns are hard.

It’s filled with such inconveniences. There’s no hope or dreams in another world. Especially for me.

Compared to others, my cheat was very weak. My physical abilities have been increased from what they were in my world but even then, compared to others, I’ll run out of breath the earliest, my reflexes are dull. I don’t even have magical energy to use magic.

That’s why I desperately became stronger.

I had no choice but to accept that I, the eldest, was the biggest burden in the group.

And to travel with them while accepting that, I had no choice but to become stronger. Doing something like leaving everything to kids who have barely lived half my own life, I simply could not do.

I requested the people from the Knight Orders to teach me about sword fighting. I learnt reading and writing with the help of Utano-san and a

famous researcher. I even tried to learn negotiating skills to be able to become more of use.

The [God Slaying Weapon] I wished for was simply a weapon and its user, me, was an amateur. I couldn't let monsters take advantage of that.

I might be able to fight against the Demon God but at the start of our journey, there were only small fry monsters that we'd face so I could only be desperate.

Everyone else was able to become stronger than me with only half of the effort.

It's amazing I didn't become depressed. Really.

"Will everyone be able to return.....alive?"(aya)

"We will."

Nobody's strong.

Cheats, sword skills, unequalled magical energy, all are nothing more than a pebble at the side of the road.

We came to this world without any kind of resolve. The exaggerated over-the-top goal of saving the world was hiding the reality in front of us. Even though death is right beside us, we have simply become unable to see it.

That's why.

"I promise. All of us will return safe and sound together."(renji) In the end, after everything was over, all of us decided to stay in this world though.

Even though it's a world where death is always beside you. But that's why.....we had people we could trust that were even closer to us than death in this world.

"If I was in danger.....will you protect me again?"(aya)

"If anyone was in danger, I'd definitely protect them."(renji)

That was an extremely embarrassing thing to say.

Me, who was the weakest was proclaiming that he'd protect his comrades who were the strongest in the world.

The word [definitely] was something only meant for the use of protagonists and should not be used by someone like me who was Villager C.

To protect someone, you have to constantly put your life on the line.

Even if you are close to death, even when you're full of wounds, even when your spirit is on the verge of breaking, even when you're in front of an extremely strong enemy.

You have to stand back up. You have to keep on holding on to your weapon.

You have to speak sharply. You cannot give up.

.....now that I think back, it really was a miracle I lived through that all.

Even though everyone around me could be carefree even when I'd end up all bloody.

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As I opened my eyes, I ended up frowning due to the sunlight shining from within the curtains.

[Finally woke up, sleepyhead?]

"n, yeah.....right now....."

[It's almost afternoon, seriously.]

I ended up getting sighed at just because I took a nap.

Well, even I think that I slept a bit too much for some reason even though I didn't even drink.

"Say, Ermenhilde."

[Hm?]

“……nevermind.”

[Wake up already. Get to work, sleepyhead.]

I got scolded.

While hearing that voice inside my head, I got up from my bed.

A nostalgic dream. From when I had been journeying with my comrades, a dream with Aya. After that, Aya worked hard as a hole digging magician.

In fact, rather than using unequalled magic, it was easier for us when she trapped monsters in her pitfalls. After all, we didn’t have to get dragged into her normal magic anymore. Well, we only depended on that magic when sweeping away a group of monsters that had accumulated.

Against large armies of monsters, she did make rocks and fire rain from afar to win before the enemy could even reach us.

Against small number of enemies or in close combat, even a fireball would turn into friendly fire so it was troublesome. Even overpowered cheats have their own merits and demerits.

“Ermenhilde.”

[……what now?]

“Do you think Aya’s still digging holes?”

[Yeah, she should be .]

Immediate reply.

Well, it’s normal since it is a great tactic I guess.

While thinking that, I changed my clothes.

[She probably believes that if she keeps on doing that, Renji will keep on protecting her I guess.]

“In fact, I want to be protected by her instead though.”

[It can’t be helped. You wished for that, and did promise her that after

all.]

That's true.

I wished the Goddess that I want to protect someone. If it gets dangerous, I promised I'll protect her.

.....that's why, I could only sigh. I wished and I promised. I cannot change the past.

"Or rather, shouldn't she have forgotten that already? It's been almost 2 years."

[I doubt she would forget that.]

For some reason, Ermenhilde's voice held some sort of confidence.

It was such a dangerous journey. I doubt she'd remember such trivial words. That too, it's been 2 years from then. It's already a thing of the past.

At least, if I was Aya, I would've forgotten it. What kind of credibility would those words have if spoken by someone weaker than you?

The only reason I remember it is because it was fricking embarrassing for me and a part of my dark history(shameful past).

[Women are such creatures.]

"No, you're a medal."

[Tch.]

It clicked its tongue. What a terrible partner to do that during a conversation.

Sighing at such an Ermenhilde, I stretched my body a bit. Stretching my stiffened body, it felt really nice.

"Today as well, I'll seriously do jobs."

[Please do. Don't show your pathetic side, you're an adult right?]

"I get the feeling that I have already done that way too many times though."

How many times was I saved by kids?

How many times did I attack only through surprise attacks and not frontal ones?

How many times did I bow my head to people?

How many times did I mourn not being able to protect someone?

How many, how many, how many.....

[Is that so?]

“Yeah, that is so.”

Changing my clothes, I fixed my appearance at bare minimum.

While thinking about what kind of job should I pick today.

Well, I guess I’ll pick something like collecting herbs, though. It’s easy, and safe.

After washing my face, I was wondering about what to do of my beard ——— [I only have memories of Renji looking cool though.]

“.....you, really say extremely embarrassing things sometimes, don’t you?”

[No such thing.]

I, looking cool?

I thought about my past but couldn’t think of a single one.

Probably the coolest one is when I faced the Demon God one-on-one, I guess. I almost died though.

Talking sharply like an idiot and then almost getting killed, I can only think of that as pathetic though. Also, the fact that that was the coolest moment, I really can’t help it at all.

“For example?”

So I decided to ask instead.

I also want to know these cool moments my partner speaks of.

And, then I'll explain the reality of that scene as well. Even I think my reasons are truly ridiculous sometimes.

[Not stepping back even once against the Demon Lord. You kept on swinging me against the Demon God at the very front. You kept on fighting in front of those heroes you could call the strongest.....no matter how many times you fell, you always stood back up.]

"Well, I was desperate after all."

What the heck's that?

If I didn't do that, I would've died. I wouldn't have come out of it alive if I didn't do that. And above all—- I was always full of injuries. If I had not been protected by my comrades, I would've died countless times.

That's why I did not step back. That's why I never let go of Ermenhilde. That's why I stood back up. If I didn't do at least that much, I wouldn't have been able to stand alongside my comrades.

And above all—— when children were fighting with their lives on the line, I couldn't be the one to retire first.

"I didn't want to die that's why I fought so hard. That's why I killed. It's something very normal, Emenhilde."

[Yeah, that's right. It's normal.]

Because I don't want to die, I want to live, I don't want to look pathetic.

That was something totally normal and very obvious, and something anyone would do.

Cool? That isn't it. It wasn't something so great.

I was simply scared of looking pathetic and being abandoned by them. I was afraid of being left alone. I was afraid of losing all of my comrades in this other world.

No matter how many words you pile up, the answer will be the same. I was afraid of getting hated by my comrades so I fought desperately.

Not for the world, not for someone, not for something. Even if I say I

want to protect, in the end I was worried the most about my own self.

“It’s something anyone can do, Ermenhilde.”

For myself—-not for some random stranger, one becomes desperate for himself.

It something anyone can think of. Something anyone can do. To live, to not die——it’s obvious that anyone can do it.

[Not everyone can do it, Yamada Renji.]

But my partner’s answer was the opposite so I could only feel slightly happy.

The power granted to me by the Goddess, Ermenhilde. It has been watching me from the sides all the time.

It became my sword, my spear, my bow—-my weapon, no matter what the time was and fought alongside me.

And, is always trying to make me into a hero.....even now, it is with me. Even though, I’m just a normal man who could be found anywhere.

[I don’t think like that.]

Putting on my mantle, I set the iron knife to my waist.

I picked up Ermenhilde that was lying beside my pillow.

[It’s because it was Renji, you could do such things.]

“I see.”

ping I flicked Ermenhilde.

That voice seemed boastful and proud and somehow made me feel really embarrassed.

That’s why, to hide my embarrassment, I flicked Ermenhilde like it was usual.

It was, Tails.

“haah. Guess I’ll have to work hard today as well.”

[Only half of the day is left though.]

With just that, we returned to our usual relationship.

User and his weapon. Partners. That kind of relationship.

Chapter 15: Hero and the City of Magicians (4)

While raising a noise similar to scratching claws on a blackboard, monsters with earth-coloured skin came at me while raising their weapons.

Goblin. The monster I have fought the most in this world. Inside the deep forest, their repulsiveness became more prominent and gave you goosebumps just by rushing towards you.

The Forest of Magical Energy.

Its the place where I came yesterday to collect spirit grass. I had been attacked by goblins that time too but this time the situation is a bit more troublesome.

After all, there's still more?, they are coming in numbers that'd make you think like that. Spare me from this. I think like that but the Goblins come at me while I'm sighing.

Today also, the elf with whom I formed a party is not in visible range. Probably he's hiding above a tree or something. I have this image of being able to aim easier from higher places with a bow i guess.

While thinking that, I rotated the knife in my hands.

[They're coming.]

"I know."

Without any kind of strategy, the goblin charged at me head-on.

I turned away that attack with the iron knife in my right hand and the long sword being held by the goblin stabbed into the ground.

As it panicked to pull it out, I trampled on it with my feet and slashed with my knife. I couldn't cut it apart completely but since it had torn open its flesh, blood began gushing out.

The bloodspray dirtied my mantle as the goblin collapsed in front of me.

But, the goblins showed no hesitation even after seeing its own kind fall like that. Another one charged at me from behind while screaming.

"There's quite a lot of 'em."

This was the 6th one. As I turned back, the 7th goblin died after getting shot in the head by an arrow.

As it fell down while running, it stopped near my feet. I doubt there's any need to deal another blow to it, its definitely dead. While confirming its death with a glance, I turned towards the 8th and the 9th one.

I didn't even look towards the place where my comrade who had fired the arrow was at. Words of gratitude, etc, all will distractions in this situation.

I simply cut and my comrade shoots.

[They're still coming——it really feels like there's just an infinite number of them.]

"Anything but that."

Swinging the knife in empty air, I got rid of the blood sticking to it. It's sharpness has begun to fall. The edge is chipped as well. It won't be able to take any more attacks. I clicked my tongue at that.

Well, it was ridiculous to fight monsters with just an iron knife in the first place.

Thinking that, I decided to borrow the long sword that goblin was using before I killed it.

As I pulled out the sword from the ground, I felt like my balance would crumble due to the difference in weight of it.

Since I had been using only an iron knife recently, using a different weapon suddenly becomes all the more difficult. It's been a long time since i felt such a weight in my hands.

"I'm not good with heavy ones, really."

[Wanna switch to using me?]

I decided to refrain from that. It would be one thing if I didn't have any weapon at all but if I am not lacking of weapons, I want to avoid using Ermenhilde. Also, if i unsheathed the GodSlaying weapon, my identity would also be revealed. That'd be troublesome.

If it was an extremely dangerous situation, I would have no choice but I should be fine for now.

"With a proper sword, I should be able to take care of mere Goblins. Probably."

[The Elf archer is there as well after all.]

"Yeah."

At the same time as I answered that, i swung the longsword towards the 2 goblins coming towards me. I used only one hand to attack but the slash was sharper than I expected and cut the through the shoulder of the one running towards me till its chest. But due to lack of strength, I was unable to cut through completely and my sword remained stuck in its body.

"tch."

The remaining one goblin swung its rusted axe at me in the meantime.

It was aimed at my face but before it could reach, I kicked at its body faster. The leather boots crushed its flesh and the sensation of crushing something hard came through my feet.

Faster than I could feel discomfort from that sensation, the goblin I had kicked bent forward and vomited.

Not letting that chance get away, I forcefully pulled out the long sword and struck it at its neck.

"fuu."

[That was slightly dangerous.]

"That wasn't just 'slightly' dangerous dammit."

Throwing away the bloodstained longsword, I transferred the iron knife to my right hand again.

As expected, this was easier to use. But, something even lighter yet longer weapon would be more easier to use though.

While thinking that, I breathed a huge sigh. I'm tired. Both physically and mentally. This endless fight is making me feel really anxious. If this goes on, I could only expect things to get worse.

Deep forest, thick vegetation. Even the sacredness I felt the last time from the hundreds of years old trees was now getting swallowed by this dark ominous forest.

Suddenly, once again the bushes swayed unnaturally. As expected, once again goblins appeared from it. And they're even armed. And there's four of them……My sigh became deeper.

But one of them died suddenly by getting hit by an arrow to its head. The remaining goblins showed signs of unrest momentarily due to that and in that time, one more died from another arrow.

How many exactly have we killed till now?

While I was thinking that, the remaining two faced towards me.

"So they still aren't running away?"

[And that's really weird.]

Ermenhilde said that. I, and even the Elf archer are probably thinking the same.

It's weird. Even if they're just goblins, they should have realized the difference in strength after seeing so many of their comrades getting killed. In the first place, these wild goblins should be more sensitive in that aspect as compared to humans.

But even so, there's no signs of them wanting to run away.

I ended up clicking my tongue. I don't have infinite stamina here. Even if I get an infinite number of weapons, the user is only a slightly skilled human. I'm not sure how many arrows does the Elf still have either. While I was thinking that, one of the goblins coming towards me died after getting shot at the heart with an arrow.

“With this–”

I threw the rusted axe lying near my feet towards the goblin.

Both the aim and strength of that throw was half hearted and the axe was deflected by the goblin.

In that moment, the iron knife, which was the actual attack, stabbed into its face. It stood stock still for a moment then soon fell to its knees.

The annoying sound that had been resounding till now, the sound of weapons, all disappeared. It was silence that could hurt the ears.

Even after around 15 secs passed, more of them didn’t come. I finally breathed in relief.

[It’s over, eh?]

“.....Thank god.”

[Oh c’mon—you could’ve fought even more if you use me.]

“This much is my limit realy.”

I shrugged my shoulders. Ah, I’m really tired.

I looked at the goblin corpses lying around and began to count them. 12. I tilted my head due to the fact that the number didn’t match to what I had been counting while fighting.

Was I unable to completely kill some? While I was thinking that, the Elf guy came down from the sky. Well, I guess he really was sniping from some tree branch.

“Are you really a human?”(elf)

“Well, I’m not an Elf atleast.”(renji)

Replying that to the sudden words, I pulled out the iron knife sticking in the goblin’s head.

While thinking about the fact that the number of corpses didn’t match, i swung the knife once to remove the blood remaining on it.

Goblin. They were one of the major and most common of the monsters

on the Imnesia continent but.....

“Wasn’t their numbers a bit too much?”

[That’s true.]

Meeting monsters when going into the grasslands for herb collecting isn’t rare. Since we went into the Forest of Magical Energy this time, the encounter rate would be even higher.

That much wasn’t really surprising but this time, their numbers were really too big.

It’d wouldn’t be unreasonable if this was a cave or a Goblin dwelling but this number wasn’t something one should face inside this kind of forest.

Even I am pretty used to travelling and journeying. I make sure not to get too close to places that might be a place where monsters would gather. I wasn’t even cautious since we were near the entrance of the forest. When the battle had begun, I was sure that it’d end pretty quickly.

Sure, Goblins tend to flock together. That habit is what makes Goblins more difficult than usual but even so!

And they seemed to be even filled with excessive bloodlust as well. Even if we had smaller numbers, it was still ridiculous to attack us directly from the front. Even the fact that they kept on coming even after seeing so many of their comrades killed was weird in my opinion. Their actions were different from what a goblin would usually take.

Any sane person, if they had bigger numbers, would first surround us then weaken us before going for the kill.

But even so, these goblins didn’t even make use of the terrain inside the forest and charged at us head-on blindly. That’s why, I was confused.

Maybe Ermenhilde also felt something, its voice was low.

Feeling the sacredness of the forest getting tainted by the smell of blood, my mood worsened.

“Are you fine?”

“Yeah, no problems. You seem fine as well.”

“I’m so tired I feel like crying though. I’ve had enough of monster subjugation for some time now.”

As i shrugged my shoulders I sighed.

I think I also heard fed-up sigh coming from my pocket as well.

“Your personality is really hard to understand.”

“Isn’t it the opposite. I simply hate trouble and want to live in peace.”

[Work seriously.]

Am I not working seriously? After all, didn’t I come to this forest to collect spirit grass?? Though I don’t really feel like doing that request anymore. I’m really tired. I want to go back and sleep.

But still, to think that we’d get attacked by goblins again when we both decided to go gather herbs together.

“It seems we have some kind of fate with the goblins.”

“Well, it’s not something good to have.”

He laughed a little.

I remember getting a request to subjugate goblins during the first time as well.

And this time as well, we were attacked by goblins. There really might some kind of fate.

With Goblins.

…….It’s really an ill-fate to have. I want to work more safely.

“Weren’t the goblins just now, weird?”

“Hmm….true, I felt that they were more bloodthirsty than usual.”

Putting a finger on that well-shaped face, the elf closed his eyes as if thinking something.

He might have something to think about this. The fact that he isn’t saying it out loud means that I’m still not trusted well enough.

Without really minding that, I kneeled near the goblin corpse nearby.

[It's just a normal corpse. I can't feel any kind of special magical energy from it.]

"Thought so."

I checked through the corpse while keeping my knife unsheathed but there wasn't anything unusual about it.

If Ermenhilde didn't feel anything strange, then there really isn't anything to it. Well, both me and Ermenhilde aren't really familiar with magical energy though.

I could think of various possibilities but all had very low chance to be true. The Demon Lord or the demons could manipulate monsters but they don't come out of their continent, Abenelm, normally. Now that the Demon God has been killed, the chances should be even lesser.

The sensation of blood on my fingers wasn't really pleasant but it was usual stuff for me. I rubbed my fingers with the blood but there was still no change.

Am I overthinking this?

It really might be just a swarm of goblins.

"Well it's no use investigating it without knowing anything, I guess."

"That's true. Also, if there was a change in the monsters in the forest, then we elves would have noticed."

"I guess that's true as well."

Elves should be more sensitive to such things than me. Especially if its something inside the forest. Cutting out the proof of subjugation from the goblin, I put the knife in its sheath and breathed a sigh.

As the scent of blood stuck into my nose, I ended up grimacing. I have gotten used to the scent of blood but that doesn't mean I'll start liking it.

Also, my iron knife has also gone bad. I guess, sharpening it alone wouldn't cut it anymore.

After returning to the Magic City, I should see if there's a better weapon available somewhere.

……Though Ermenhilde would start sulking again if I do so.

"It'd be tiring to fight any more goblins. Let's quickly gather the herbs and return."

"Yeah, let's."

Even the Elf would want to avoid tainting the forest with monster blood.

Well, they don't seem to forgive the existence of monsters inside the forest either.

While thinking that, I began walking.

[This isn't interesting.]

As if I care.

Rather than that, I brought out the memo from my pocket.

It's the memo which has the request written on it. In the client's name part, Aya's name is written. It's details involved collecting herbs together with her. The rewards was 50 copper coins. It's an extra-ordinary amount.

"What, did you have another request accepted alongside this?"(elf) "Something like that."

A few days have passed since then. The reward amount has been steadily increasing.

She should be getting impatient by now. It's fun just imagining it.

"….You're making a disgusting face."

"I was born with it. Leave me alone."

I guess I should go and meet her already.

Just as Ermenhilde had said back then, the reward for just herb gathering would probably really become 1 gold coin.

A gold coin. That's way above a child's pocket money. Well, one way or

the other, she is also a hero of the country. She should be having gold coins unlike me. But if I actually made Aya do that while teasing her, how would others look at me if they knew about it....?

Well, they'd probably realize that I was just playing around. I'll still get scolded though.

[Seriously—-Are you really that afraid of meeting them?]

"Haa~h"

I answered Ermenhilde's words with a sigh. As usual, this one is straight to the point.

The fact that I was unable to refute it, was it because it was correct or because there was the elf beside me?

Without knowing that, I could only sigh and continue into the forest.

[It has only been an year. Your bonds won't disappear in just that much time.]

Inside my pocket, I traced the medal with my finger.

As usual my partner is straightforward. I lightly patted it.

If the Elf was not beside me right now.....how would I have answered it back?

Well, whatever. I would know the answer when I meet Souichi and the others.

The case with the goblins, was it just our bad luck? It was slightly worrying me but it shouldn't concern me in any case. I have no intention to thrust my neck into more trouble and its the job of brave protagonists to solve such things. I'm not one.

I explained myself. I did but—

"It'd be nice if nothing really happens."

"—?"

I really think it'd be nice if nothing happens.

I hate trouble. I have been involved in way too much already after coming to this world already after all.

……now that the world is saved, I just want to live in peace.

Chapter 16: Hero and the City of Magicians (5)

By the time I returned to the Magic City, the Sun had already begun to set.

While holding the bag filled with the gold and silver coins, the reward I got from the guild, I breathed a sigh.

I really worked too much today. To think that I'd be able to earn a gold coin in a single day! The reward for 12 goblins was really big. I also sold the equipment I had recovered from them so I would get 1 gold coin even after dividing the reward in two. Let's have a luxurious dinner for tonight, I ended up smiling while thinking that. Well, I had my fare share of life threatening experience as a result as well though.

I really don't wan to go through something like that ever again. Earning a lot isn't bad but, I really want to avoid putting my life at risk everytime.

"What will you do now?"(renji)

"I'll go back to my forest now."(elf)

"I see. If something comes up, I'll be counting on you again."

"Sure."

With just that, we decided to split for today.

The city at dusk, families buying ingredients for dinner, people returning from their jobs.

Getting mixed in that same crowd, the beautiful Elf man disappeared from my vision. Even the way he leaves is cool. His back looks really manly in my opinion.

Somehow I feel a bit envious of that. While feeling such slight jealousy inside, I sighed again.

"Now then, what to do next."

Returning back to the inn to have dinner, have a drink and going to

sleep doesn't sound bad at all. It's a bit early though.

This world has too few ways for amusement. My old comrades have been trying to make chess and trump cards popular but that has yet to spread to the massess.

The main reason behind that is that they lack the means to manufacture such things in bulk easily. After they can't depend on machines like in modern japan and to make such things by hand, they'll need lot of free labour.

For a country that had been living in the fear of the Demon God till the past 1 year, that would be impossible. Young ones were enlisted in the army or working in repairing and restoring towns destroyed by demons. Elders and children were involved in farmwork or household chores.

They rarely think of indulging in amusement and their thinking is basically, it's better to work and earn money than have fun. I guess this will continue for some more time. It's not like the threat of monsters has completely disappeared so it's only obvious.

That's why at night, drinking, exchanging info with strangers and adventurers, fighting each other; that's basically what most people did.

[Isn't it about time for the Magic Academy to close for the day as well?]

"hm?"

I turned my gaze towards the setting sun. Well, I guess it's around time for school to end I guess.

I once again pondered over what to do.

[Oh c'mon. Can you not move forward till someone pushes your back?]

"But..."

Now how should I answer Ermenhilde's question resounding inside my head?

I want to meet them, I think. There's no reason for me not to do so. I haven't met them for one whole year. The feeling of seeing those children having grown up now is strong.

At the same time, what should I talk about when I actually meet them? I end up thinking like that.

Anxiety. If I were to put it in words, it was only that. I want to meet them but I don't know what I should say to them.

Considering that I'm supposed to be the elder here, this isn't laughable. 'It's been a long time!' even though I know that all I have to do is just say that much..

"haah."

[Don't you want to meet them?]

On hearing that, I raised my head.

"I do."

[Then do so. You don't have any reason not to, so isn't it simple?]

"I see."

As usual, Ermenhilde's straightforward, or should I say simple.

I ended up feeling envious of my partner. Though I know I'm simply being irresolute and overthinking things too much. this can't even be called an actual problem.

Being pushed by Ermenhilde's words, I began walking as I mixed into the crowd.

Albana Magic Academy. It's oldest academy in the Magic City Ofan.

Only nobles and those with great talent can attend that place though nowadays, only nobles or children with similar backing are attending that place.

Basically, rather than a place to learn and gain knowledge, it has simply become a place to earn a degree from a prestigious school.

Well not all are like that but according to the citizens of this city, majority of the students belong to that category. Though that's info I gained while only drinking, but then again, a man's true feelings come out only when he's drinking.

[Going by the rumours, the place Souichi and the others are going isn't exactly a great place, eh.]

"Belonging to a high lineage or pedigree means the more oblingations you have as well after all."

Well, it's not like I have any such experience though. Thinking till that, I sensed a gaze and I turned around.

Though I'm in such a crowd but our eyes definitely intersected. A man in a worn-out robe. What reason could it be? To be targeted by a mysterious man?....I could think of way too many.

For example, something related to religion. Though he was the Demon God, there were people who'd still call 'GodSlaying' as a grave sin. Well, it's not like I can't understand them.

Our powers are too great. There are people who fear that we can also kill the Goddess of the humans or the Spirit God of the Demihumans as well. Truly, it's not really difficult to understand.

A power too strong will always be hated. These kind of things shown in mangas and movies, are actually very true in this actual different world as well.

Nevertheless, I neither want to create more enemies nor do I want to indulge in more bloodshed. What will I get from all that? Rather than hating us, spen this energy in recovering from the after effects left by the Demon God.

There are others who simply hate us other world heroes, now that the Demon God is dead, we are not needed here, or something like that.

Though they are an extreme minority, they do exist. I wonder if Utano-san and Kuuki who are actually at the core of the Kingdom are gathering too much attention to themselves.

[What happened?]

"No, nothing."

While I was thinking that, the owner of that gaze disappeared in the

crowd.

I wonder what all that was about? Well considering he didn't come to talk, I doubt he has any sort of good will towards me.

"Someone was looking atme."

[Did he realize that it was Renji and me?]

I really had enough of this.

I simply want to live leisurely as an adventurer.

Also, I doubt that that robed man was simply someone normal.

It's only my wild intution though.

"...I really am not good with places with too many people."

[That's a first I'm hearing something like that.]

That's because it's the first time I'm saying that. In fact, places with more people are better than less. The man known as Yamada Renji can easily mix and hide inside a crowd after all.

Thinking till that, rather than hiding my status it feels more like something a guy with chuunibyou or a hikkikomori would think like.

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In front of me was a giant gate....It really is huge.

The stone gate gave off a sense of pressure and gives an image of blocking anything coming towards it. It was wide enough for 3 carriages to pass through easily alongside each other, and was so tall that I had to raise my head to see its top.

On both sides of this gate were armoured guards with spears, 2 on each side, making a total of 4 guards.

Behind them was a small iron door probably for these guards and students to pass through the gate. It'd be a pain to open that giant gate

each and every time I guess.

Do these guys get salary just for standing there whole day?...I ended up thinking like that.

“How did they even build this thing?”

[Well, wouldn’t it be made by humans carrying stones, shaping them and then combining them together normally?]

Well, that may be so but it really looks amazing. The Imnesia’s royal castle was also amazing but this Magic Academy’s gate is also incredible. You might call it ‘the potential of human beings’ but it’s really amazing how people actually carried so many stones to here. Even though it wasn’t like only one man was doing it but still.

The stones have been shaped equally in the form of ingots and hundreds and thousands of such ingots have been brought together to make this gate.

The door was of silver. It’s useful in driving away demons and is used quite a lot in the royal castle and other such old buildings.

In fact, Ghosts and undeads can’t even touch such doors at all. In front of such a big gate, I think low level ghosts won’t even be able to come closer to this. Though it’s completely possible to break and enter through the stone parts.

“Is something the matter?”

“Ah, no. I was just thinking how amazing this gate is.”(renji)

“What, is this your first time in Ofan? Albana Magic academy’s front gate is really famous but even then it’s your first time seeing it?”

[Oi, now we’re being treated like we’re some country bumpkins.]

Since I was looking curiously at the huge gate, I was misunderstood as such. Answering the guard, I agreed to Ermenhilde’s words inside my mind. Well, it’s not exactly incorrect to say that I’m from some rural place. I did spend the past 1 year in exactly the remotest of villages.

Also, it’d be helpful for me too if I was misunderstood like this. It’d be a

pain if they get uselessly suspicious of me after all.

“I’d been living a life not related to a place like schools, you see.”(renji) “I see. Well, only rich ones can afford to go to such place after all.”

“Yes. Unfortunately, I have been living my life as an adventurer to meet my daily needs.”(renji) “Ah, I guess that makes sense.”

From my outfit he seems to have judged me as an adventurer—a weak one that is.

I don’t know whether I should be happy or sad about it.

For the time being, my partner was deeply sighing inside my pocket.

[....How deplorable.]

“If you’re looking for a job, then you should go to the guild.”

“Yes, well, I have something to do at the academy.”

“—fuun.”

His gaze turned towards me as if looking at someone suspicious.

Well, I do look the part. My equipment was just a tunic and trousers. And just a mantle over it. I totally do not look like someone who’d have something to do at a place where nobles go.

Rather than equipment, what I’m wearing is more similar to casual wear. Rather than an adventurer, it’d be easier to believe that I was a normal citizen.

The only thing that was something like a proof of me being an adventurer would be the iron knife hanging by my waist. If even that was a long sword, the impression would have been much better.

My mantle was stained with the blood of goblins so I might look slightly more adventurer-like I hope.

“Is it a request?”

“No. An acquaintance of mine attends this school so I thought I sgould show my face since I came to Ofan during my journey.”(renji) “An acquaintance?”

“Yes.”

[Wouldn’t it be fine if you just used the name ‘Renji’?]

Then, I’ll definitely be treated like some sort of fraud/swindler. That would definitely lead to them becoming overly suspicious leading to me being interrogated.

The result would probably be the same if I used the name of Souichi or the others, I can totally imagine it.

A nameless adventurer trying to get close to heroes. Maybe even a normal citizen. These dutiful guards would probably see it like that.

“So, will it be fine if I wait in front of the gate for a while?”(renji)
“….What, so you don’t want to go inside?”

“It’s a school for nobles right? It’ll only end up troublesome for me.”

As I shrugged my shoulders, I felt the guards relaxing a bit.

“So you understand that much.”

“I do have certain years of experience with my age after all.”(renji)
“Then, I don’t really have anything special to say to you. Just don’t cause a scene.”

Saying that, the guard returned to his station. ‘Sorry for the trouble’ I sent him away with a smile.

Seemed like a pretty frank guy to me.

[….I just can’t understand.]

“Get used to it. Unfortunately, I do not hold a special title like a Hero.”

There were very few people around the academy.

There were a few who were looking at the gate like me, and that was all.

Rest were the guards on duty. The giant stone wall dyed by the setting sun gave off a feeling of loneliness as well.

On looking closely, there were no weeds growing on the wall. I guess it’s being properly maintained.

[No matter how many times I hear it, I can't get used to Renji's formal way of speaking.]

"You're being rude, as usual."

Even like this, I do intend to maintain the least amount of formality necessary.

In fact, among the ones that traveled with me, wasn't I the one tended to be the most wary of such things?

Even the youths, though they were cautious at first, but after getting used to us, lost all kinds of formality in their speech.

Only the guys in the age group of me and Utano-san kept this sort of decency in our way of speech.

The ones who didn't mind it all were the school going children group. Getting excited due to going through something like getting summoned to another world, they were super happy.

At first, they even thought they were some special humans or something. Though that all disappeared after the journey actually started.

Journeys are meant to be tiring. Walking, riding horses, swaying in carriages, etc.

There was nothing as great as cars here. Feet hurt after walking, horses would sway, and carriages were hard to sit in.

They'd soon start complaining. And when they finally started getting used to it, we had to climb mountains, entering forests. The enjoyment of getting summoned to another world disappeared very quickly, and living became desperate, fighting after getting frustrated, and then laughing after making up.

[I wonder if Souichi and the others are healthy.]

"They probably are. Though Souichi and Aya are probably still fighting a lot."

[That's true.]

I ended up laughing imagining those scenes from an year ago.

Close childhood friends...in fact one could say that they got along well a bit too much. ALways fighting and then quickly making up again.

On being reckless while fighting monsters, on their food habits, on every small and important topic, they'd argue with each other.

But, I guess they'd still be like that. I can easily imagine them like that.

"Hm?"

While I was reminiscing about the past, a heavy sound of bell resounded in the world at dusk.

My consciousness came back to reality.

That did sound like the bell of ending classes but how is it actually?

For some time, I focused towards the academy.

At that, the guard I had been talking to came towards me again.

"Classes ended just now. The dorms are that way but will you wait near the gate here?"

With his finger, he pointed towards the dorms. Or rather, is that how the dorms are. It's meant for nobles so the bulding are completely different from where a normal would live.

They sure are living in an amazing place. As I said that, the guard laughed.

"I'll wait here. It seems even the dorms would be uncomfortable for me."

"Wise decision."

[I'm bored.]

For a medal, you sure are impatient.

As I gave a wry smile at the unexpected words, the guard laughed again.

"If the nobles lived a bit more modestly, the lives of the commoners would also have gotten better."

It seems he misunderstood my reply to Ermenhilde and continued the conversation.

Well it is boring just waiting like this. And I have to be careful of the surroundings when talking to Ermenhilde. That's tiring in its own way.

"That's true. Money gathers with those who already have it whereas goes away from those who don't after all."

"It's a harsh world. Even I'd like to have an extravagant dinner sometimes."

Shrugging my shoulders, I agreed with him.

Well, that isn't really necessary though. Living modestly is good in its own way.

Even without luxury, humans will live on. In fact getting too used to luxury, and becoming unable to live modestly is pathetic in my opinion.

Though there are a lot of people here, what about actually socializing?

For me, I prefer the relaxed and warm atmosphere of villages. But I guess people will always prefer luxury to that.

While I talked like that with guard for some time, the silver door opened, and students began to leave.

It seems there are people on the other side of the gate as well who opened it.

There were men whose muscles could be seen from above their clothes —So it's human powered eh? There were 6 of them and all of them were skinheads. I wonder if there's some meaning behind it. I doubt it though.

"Then, good luck with your job."

"Ou. It'd be good if you can also meet with the one you want."

"Thank you very much."

One again sending the guard off, I brought out Ermenhilde from my pocket.

"Well then, will I really meet them?"

[It's been an year after all. I'm excited to see how much they've grown.]

"That's true."

I flicked the medal with a ping. Heads.

fuu, breathing a sigh, I returned Ermenhilde into my pocket.

"I feel nervous."

[How cute.]

Stop that. I'm not at an age where I'll get happy if you say that. In the first place, the word 'cute' isn't a compliment for guys.

The students also realized of my presence and were glancing at me.

Well, I do realize that my clothes really don't match the place.

I should have paid a little more attention to my attire maybe? Well, not that it would have changed much. My sense in clothing is average.

At least I'll be able to talk properly to Souichi and others on these clothes.

"huh?"

While I was appraising my clothes, I heard a somewhat recognisable voice.

On turning towards it, a single girl was standing there.

A high class golden embroidered blue robe. A red ribbon and white blouse. A blue skirt that reached till the thighs. A beret like hat on the head. It was the uniform of the academy.

And above all, black hair and black eyes. Hair that reached the waist.

Glossy, well-maintained straight hair. Slightly drooping big eyes.

I ended up staring at that recognisable face for some time.

"Yayoi-chan?"

"Renji-oniisan?"

We both called each other's names.

For a second I thought it'd be Aya but I was totally wrong.

In just a year, Aya would not be able to give off such a calm and gentle presence, I'd definitely not recognise her if that was really the case.

"You've grown."

"Renji-oniisan has.....grown out his beard."

At that, she started chuckling at me.

[That is why I said. Shave! It doesn't suit you, a beard that is. Looks untidy...]

Such harsh remarks. It seems to have gotten even more unforgiving due to finding someone with a similar opinion, I guess.

There's no such thing, I rubbed my chin. I don't find that slightly prickly sensation to be bad.

"Eru-san as well, it's been a long time."(yayoi)

[Ah, long time no see Yayoi. You've gotten prettier.]

"Thank you very much."

I see, so that's what I should've said.

—-nope, not going to say that actually though. There's no way I can say that to someone who feels like a daughter.

"Also, I have the same opinion as Eru-san."

"Hm?"

"The beard, it doesn't suit you."

I ended up averting my gaze at that.

I see, so it doesn't suit me.

Being told that by a girl with a smile sure has an effect. It felt like a knife just stabbed through my chest.

[Say it more. Renji doesn't listen to what I say after all.]

"Really? I don't think so though?"(yayoi)

“That’s because Ermenhilde started nagging too much in past one year.”(renji) [I have to say something if Renji is being lazy.]

As we continued our usual banter, she gave a small chuckle again.

As she laughed while hiding her mouth with her hand, she looked even more prettier than her age.

“Both Renji-oniisan and Eru-san haven’t changed much.”(yayoi)

[Is that so? Renji’s lifestyle has become extremely dull and lazy in my opinion.]

“Oi stop. It hasn’t become that bad.”

“fufu.”

As I quarreled with Ermenhilde, Yayoi-chan laughed at us.

Hmm.

“Really, you both haven’t changed.”

“Yayoi-chan has gotten bigger though.”

“….Telling a girl that she’s gotten bigger might not really be a compliment though?”

Is that so?

Her height’s grown, and her atmosphere has become calmer. It was like that a year back as well but now it has become more adult like.

I guess it’s true when they say that children grow fast. Even though her height was barely till my chest back then, now she’s as tall as my shoulders.

Her height that was taller than the normal girl her age made her feel even more mature.

Her long hair and robe gently swayed with the wind. Yayoi-chan standing in the sunset looked extremely precious and my chest became warm inside.

My worries regarding what I should say to them completely

disappeared. From the bottom of my heart, I felt glad that I decided to meet them again.

[We seem to be standing out. How about moving to a place where we can talk with ease?]

On Ermenhilde's words, Yayoi-chan turned towards the surroundings.

I too, at that, finally felt the need to pay attention to my surroundings.

She must be famous at the academy. Now that the classes were over, a huge crowd of students were accumulated in this area.

"This is troublesome..."(yayoi-chan)

"That's true."

"There's a park a little walk away from here. How about going there to talk?"

Saying that, she grabbed my hand.

I flinched a little from the sensation of that small and gentle hand.

"Yayoi-chan?"

Wouldn't this make us stand out even more? was what I wanted to say but the person herself kept smiling widely and led me by the hand.

"Isn't this much fine? It's been an year, let me spoil myself at least now."(yayoi) "Such things, please do with your boyfriend."

"fufu."

The answer to my words was a happy voice and a wide smile.

...Now I feel like an idiot to be worrying over what to do. No, I really might be an idiot.

[That's why I said, just go and meet them.]

"'Tis as you said."

Just because of my useless inferiority complex, I went into hiding for a whole year.

I thought that was for the best, I still think that way. An existence like

mine will only become a burden for the other God Slayers.

An existence that can only kill gods. An existence that can't fight without getting others into trouble first. The weakest among us all.

But even so, if a reunion was such a happy thing, it's a good thing I met them.

I thought that way while looking at the happy Yayoi-chan leading me.

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"umm so, it's been a while. Have you been doing well?"(renji)

"Yes. Me, nii-chan, and Aya-chan, all of us are doing well."

"I see. That's good."

Since I had no idea what I should talk about, only weird things came out of my mouth when I actually did speak. Sitting on the bench of the park, we talked about a lot of things.

About school, friends, Souichi, Aya, Yayoi. And a little about myself. It's embarrassing after all. Saying that I have been lazying around in a rural village. It's not something worth talking about.

Children were frolicking around in the park and after some time, their parents came to pick them up.

In this world, Yayoi-chan and the others don't have their parents. Utano-san or Kuuki-san had been acting as their guardians. And, I as well had been acting like a counsellor or something.

Remembering that, I started feeling nostalgic again.

Though there's a kind of lonely feeling thinking that now we don't need to act as their guardians.

As I turned towards Yayoi-chan, her face didn't have that loneliness of

the past and was happily laughing.

Her face looked really pretty. It showed that the past 1 year, her school life had been really fun for her.

“After getting summoned to this world,”(yayoi)

“un.”

“I was scared, lonely, and sad....I only had onii-chan and Aya-chan.”

Slowly, she continued speaking.

But her voice seemed bright and her face seemed happy.

That’s why I as well, brought out Ermenhilde and gently rubbed the rim of the medal.

“But now, Yuuko-san and the others let us go to school, I made lots of friends, and the other comrades of ours send us letters regularly.”

“I see. Then–”

“And today, I was able to meet Renji-oniisan as well.”

‘You aren’t lonely anymore’. My words coincided with Yayoi’s.

Our gazes met.

“I really think that we 13 should always be together.”

“I see.”

“From hereon, there will be very few times all 13 of us will meet or so Yuuko-san had said but I, want to meet everyone again.”

I made her feel lonely, I did something bad, I made her worry.

My chest grew a bit tighter on seeing the emotions in her eyes. But I was unable to avert my gaze from her serious expression.

“Please don’t disappear so selfishly ever again.”

“....Got it.”

As I nodded, her serious expression became gentler.

“Will you promise?”

“n, I get it. I promise…I won’t disappear like that. I’ll first properly tell you before doing so.”

“No, don’t disappear in the first place….”

She sighed while saying that.

But with a smile…..I scratched my cheek thinking that I ended up promising something to her.

Promises are heavy. Even the easiest of things….I’d want to make sure to protect that promise. I think that I must protect my promise no matter what.

[It’s tough to be an adult, eh?]

“It can’t be helped. Renji-oniisan is everyone’s father after all.”

“I’m not at that age yet. Utano-san may seem like a mother but I’m more closer to an elder brother at most.”

“Mouu…Renji-oniisan is the same as usual I guess.”

[Really. How deplorable..]

For some reason, these 2 seemed to be amazed at me.

A father….That’s not in my character. If Utano-san were to hear that, I can imagine her roaring in laughter.

“Also, renji-oniisan, Aya-chan had been really wanting to meet you, you know?”

[Yeah. Enough to put out requests at the guild for him.]

“That Aya. Or rather, 55 copper for herb gathering…It’d be suspicious so I’d not take up the request instead, normally.”

Saying that, I brought out the memo from my pocket.

Client: Fuyou Aya. Reward: 55 coppers. 10 times the normal reward for such a request.

Such a request, everyone’d end up wondering what kind of monster will you have to fight for this.

“Also, magic has been applied on that.”(yayoi)

“Magic?”(renji)

“Yes.”

[...I don’t sense any magical energy though?]

Or rather, what’s up with putting ‘magic’ on the memo? If it’s Aya, shouldn’t it be ‘magecraft’? [T/N: this is a little difficult to explain. It seems they are differentiating ‘Mahou’ and ‘Majutsu’ on the way of use similar to how it’s done in Type-moon/Nasuverse for those who know that. This wasn’t really explained well earlier so I had been suing ‘Magic’ for ‘Majutsu’ as well but I think I’ll change it to ‘Magecraft’ depending on the context.]

This doubt must have appeared on my face since Yayoi started giggling while hiding her mouth.

“Aya-chan wished for that memo to be noticed only by Renji-oniisan. She put out that request while ferverently wishing for that.”

I ended up tilting my head on Yayoi-chan’s words.

What kind of magic is that?

“Wishes are also a type of imagination. A strong wish can manifest as a true miracle.”

“And her wish did manifest as a miracle? Is that what you’re saying?”

Aren’t miracles supposed to be the work of Gods?

But I don’t think it’s impossible for human wishes to manifest as a miracle.

I saw such miracles many times during our journey to subjugate the Demon God so I cannot refute it. But isn’t this miracle a bit too specific?

[fumu, somehow it’s quite the romantic type of magecraft.]

“....for you to speak of words like ‘romantic’, Ermenhilde you’ve also matured/grown.”

[Tch.]

Yayoi-chan giggled as Ermenhilde clicked its tongue.

“Be sure to meet Aya-chan as well, alright?”(yayoi)

“Yeah. Also Souichi as well.”

“Yes.”

Saying that, I stood up from the bench.

We’ve talked for quite a while. Also, it’s staring to get darker as well.

The street lights running on magical energy were shimmering faintly.

“I’ll see you off till your dorm.”

“Thank you very much.”

The cold wind made my mantle sway.

Looking at the sky, the stars were twinkling and the faint red moon was in the air.

“renji-oniisan..”

“Hm?”

“It’s good that you didn’t change.”

Not understanding what Yayoi-chan meant I tilted my head in confusion.

Seeing me like that, she started chuckling again.

“Day after tomorrow, we have a holiday. How about all 4 of us meet on that day?”

[Sounds good to me.]

“Yeah.”

After that, I’ll head to the capital. I thought that in my head.

If I stay too long, I’ll start getting too attached. I’ll start thinking to stay ‘a little more, a little more time.’

That’s why, I’ll leave this city soon as well. I won’t say that out loud though.

“It’s a promise alright?”(yayoi)

“Too bad. My promises are one per person only.”

[….You are such a..]

I got a sigh from my partner but this alone I won’t change.

“It’s difficult to keep promises after all.”

“yes.”

But the person herself seems to be nodding happily.

“Renji-oniisan is a person that always keeps his promise after all.”

“……”

That level of trust makes me feel itchy.

It’s not really that great of a thing. I protect my promises. That’s only obvious. Very normal. That’s why, it’s not something on which you should base your trust on someone.

My promise with Aya. That I’ll protect her. That I’ll protect my comrade who was even stronger than me.

I have made a promise to Utano-san as well. And with my other comrades as well.

And now, my promise with Yayoi-chan also increased.

—-Ahh

[It’s tough being an Onii-chan eh?]

“Well what can I say, being called that by you is, how should I say, it doesn’t fit, no, interesting/funny…”

[…Tch.]

It really is fun. To be with your ‘comrades’.

Chapter 17: The GodSlayers (1)

The next morning after meeting with Yayoi-chan.

I woke up early for once and reached the guild sooner than usual only to find a crowd by the counter.

[What's going on?]

"Did an interesting request come up or something?"

Curious, I also went towards the counter.

At a single glance i could tell that atleast 20 people were gathered by the counter. Even the receptionist herself was not going closer.

Since it couldn't be helped, I gave up and decided to wait till things calmed down.

Thinking about confirming the request I'd do today, suddenly my shoulder was patted on.

"You're here."

"Hm? Yo, morning."

There, the elf I had been partying with recently was standing.

But, somehow he seemed really tired.

His gaze lacked the usual vigour. Also, there was no sight of the bow he usually carried.

"My bow was broken. I'm having a new one prepared for me."

It seems my expression gave away my thoughts as he explained about his bow.

But, broken? Did he have some quarrel with some humans or did he suffer a defeat against some monster?

I'm well aware of this Elf's ability. Even though the monsters in the Forest of Magical Energy are strong, in the end they're still just goblins and such. I don't think he is weak to be defeated by them.

“Did something happen?”(renji)

“Yeah. A little problem has occured.”

“Problem?”

[fumu....sounds interesting.]

I can only get a bad feeling about this though. I answered Ermenhilde’s word like this in my mind.

If possible, I want to avoid anything troublesome. Also, dangerous things as well.

“is it related to that crowd over there?”(renji)

“Pretty much.”

[What happened?]

“.....What happened? It’s rare for so many adventurers to gather like that at the counter.”(renji) Either the reward is great or it’s something very troublesome. If possible, please be the former one.

Those who came to the guild after me are also looking towards the counter wondering what happened. Also, since the crowd is big, they’re also simply standing by the side like me.

As expected, that big of crowd will attract anyone’s attention, I guess.

“Don’t you feel that goblins have been appearing a bit too much recently?”(elf) “Goblin?”

Now that I think about it, yeah.

Yesterday, we did get attacked by a bit too many of them.

Certainly, that wasn’t normal. Without any objective, for so many goblins to gather was weird.

“The abnormality has appeared in the Forest of Magical Energy as well but it seems that the situation is the same even in the plains to the south of the Magic City.”

“So, goblins are appearing in large amounts both in the Forest and in

the Southern plains of Ofan?"

[That's strange. The number of Goblins here shouldn't be that big since adventurers hunt them regularly.]

If there was a special reason behind it, the guild would have received intel on that by now.

If there isn't any, means that these goblins are appearing like that naturally. There are two ways how monsters are born.

Well, there may be others I don't know as well, but I am aware of only two of such ways.

The first is simply to give birth to a child with a partner of the same race. It's only natural, or rather, if there's a male and a female of the same species, it will happen.

The other, is through creation by the Demon God. That guy could really, as long as he had magical energy, create infinite number of monsters. Though there were some restriction/conditions to it—-we don't know what they are.

Even after the Demon God has been defeated, the fact that the monsters haven't disappeared is also a reason behind it. Neither humans nor the Demihumans have the resources to go around exterminating all the infinitely created demons. Well, they won't be created infinitely anymore but the number of monsters is still very big.

And currently they continue to increase by giving birth to children normally.

Adventurers, soldiers and the demihumans are also killing them continuously but I wonder how much the amount has actually lessened in this one year after the Demon God was killed.

"So, is the guild planning to perform a large scale sweeping force or something?"(renji) "Yeah. They are currently recruiting members."

I see.

Such occurrences weren't uncommon when the Demon God was still

alive.

When we were journeying, we even had to fight Goblins in hundreds. Well, most of them were cleared out by the mage group though. And the rest were taken care of by us.

But, we were attacked by more than 10 goblins in just the Forest. Including the ones on the plains and deeper inside the forest, the total number of Goblins should become pretty big this time as well.

How many will the guild be able to recruit for this, I wonder.

"It'd be nice if they can find some mages."(renji)

"The earnings are good, that should be able to attract quite a few."

After all, they'll get a good wall as well.

With the vanguard in front, all mages have to do is fire magic like cannons from the rear. There won't be an easier job than this.

The problem will be the battlegrounds. Even if they lure the goblins with food, the plains are far too wide. And they simply can't turn the Forest of magical energy or the any place near the city into a battlefield either. So, inevitably they'll end up fighting right in the middle of the plains. These things should be thought up by someone with better authority though. Not me.

They have a habit of swarming, so though ambushes are pretty much impossible, Goblins do have intelligence to try and surround their opponent which can become troublesome.

A magician's fire power is unquestionable but that'd backfire in a melee battle. They'll become unable to use magic that'd drag their comrades into danger. The ones who can still use it in such a case are either a total fiend or a person that has extreme level of trust in their comrades. There are magicians who know magic that won't drag their own comrades into danger but that's a very less minority.

Other than that is, Elf or Pixie's spirit magic. This is also used by drawing power from the spirits so depending on how you use it, it can

differentiate between enemy and ally.

"What should I do?"(renji)

[You won't participate?]

"I'm hesitating. The reward sounds good but the danger is equally high."

And it's not like there'd be a huge difference from my participation alone anyway.

As long as there isn't a specially strong––like that black Orc mixed with the enemies, I'm no different from a normal adventurer.

A many-against-many battle is total hell. No wait, any battle is hell. As someone who knows that, I really want to avoid getting involved in any large scale battle.

Also, it seems they'll be able to gather a huge force even if I don't take part.

"I thought you'd take part."(elf)

"....Why?"

"You seem to have money problems, and you are skilled as well. You won't have problems against mere goblins right?"

"You overestimate me. I'm not that great.....your support was simply good that's all."

As I shrugged, he ended up sighing. I wonder about that. As if saying that.

In fact, when we were attacked by goblins in large numbers, the number he took down was bigger than how many I did.

Well, it might be wrong to estimate abilities with just numbers but it's true that he made it much easier for me to move around. That alone was proof of this Elf's abilities.

"It seems you're just lazy."(elf)

[Exactly.]

.....Why the hell did you reply there Ermenhilde?

As I sighed on my partner's cruel betrayal, I headed towards the counter.

Things had calmed down and the crowd had lessened.

Seeing how many had applied till now, 30+ for the vanguard and 20+ for the rear guard including archers and magicians.

I don't know the exact number of the goblins but this many should be more than enough. I doubt I'd be able to do anything exemplary by adding to them.

And, the reward would also smaller due to that. If I messed up, maybe gathering herbs would earn me more than this.

Well, in such sweeping battles, the true limelight is on the magicians. Vanguards like me won't stand out much anyway.

On checking the lowest reward guaranteed, it was 50 copper coins. Not very great for a reward. Well, the opponents are just goblins though.

"They'll start tomorrow, eh? Pretty sudden."

[.....It's the day you promised Yayoi-chan and the others as well.]

Yeah.

Also, it seems the Magic Academy is helping as well. Basically, they'll be sending magicians. The rear guard will increase by 10 more people like that.

And that means—-

[Souichi and the others will be sent out as well.]

Seems so. With Souichi and Aya, mere goblins would be just fodder. If Yayoi-chan is also there, injuries wouldn't be a problem anymore.

It'd be one thing if we had just come into the world but for Aya who could do a magic battle with the Demon God, it'd be insta kill.

Though I doubt she'd do something that'd make her stand out so much like that. If she did that, adventurers would end up working for free.

That'd only gain animosity.

Well, she'd probably just make sure that nobody dies indirectly. Souichi as well, would probably simply increase morale of the front lines.

Now that the Demon God was defeated, the only thing expected out of the heroes is to 'stay and act like Heroes'. Protecting their comrades, saving the country, fighting for those who can't fight. Such heroism. That was all that was expected.

Also, absolute trust.

As long as Heroes are there, they'll be fine no matter what. They won't lose no matter who the opponent is.

Such absolute trust. It's damn heavy, selfish, and basically depending on others. I don't really find it bad, though. Even I think like that. If there are people you can depend on, to depend on them is what makes one human. That is what a goddess is for, that is what the GodSlayers, the apostles of the Goddess are for.

To be able to respond to that trust is what makes one a Hero, and I'm one who can't do that. It's as simple as that.

"waah....this is why I hate monster subjugation."(renji)

[umu. Only this, is something one might need to think about. Renji is awkward as usual after all.]

"....."

While saying that, I wrote my name on the participant list. Renji. Just that much.

The result won't change from just my participation. But that doesn't mean I can leave everything to Souichi and Aya.

It's a fact that I'm weak but using that as an excuse I'm not going let children do all the work.

If their burden would lessen even a bit from my participation, I'll do it.

What is a child's duty? I questioned myself. It is to study, play with

friends. Eating a lot, and to sleep a lot. That's what a child must do. (T/N: This guy is a natural born daddy Xp.) It's definitely— not to pick up a sword and fight. It's not to kill monsters. That's not the duty of a child.

"So you'll participate in the end?"

As I wrote my name, the Elf came to talk. I shrugged and answered him.

"Some acquaintances of mine are also participating you see."(renji)
"Someone dear to you?"

"Something like that. The world has finally become peaceful, I don't want them to fight anymore though."

That's why, even if just one more, I'll kill those goblins.

So that the fight can end faster, even if a little. So that, Souichi and the others can end without fighting.

I casually thought. Their school life should be fun. They are still only 18. It's an age where you'd be having fun with your friends. Yesterday, Yayoi-chan looked really happy while talking about her school life. I'm sure, Souichi and Aya would be the same.

.....That's why, I sighed. Those guys look better laughing rather than fighting. I think like that.

"If only I was stronger."(renji)

"What's that?"

"Nothing. Complaining to myself. Don't mind it."

If I was stronger. If I could fight alone. Without getting others involved, if I could protect others. Then, the burden on my comrades would have surely lessened.

If I, who was only protected all the time, could add to their strength, I could have fought more. The sacrifices would have been less.

While I was deep in my thoughts, the Elf also wrote his name on the participant list.

His name was Faylona apparently. We partied together quite a few

times but I never got to know his name. He must have been that cautious with me, I guess.

"You hadn't written your name yet?"(renji)

"I was hesitating on whether to participate or not."

And you actually called me lazy?

As I lightly glared at him, he shrugged his shoulders as if troubled.

Because he looked good even then, I ended up sighing for some reason. I really envious of handsome guys, seriously.

"If you are participating, then I'll do as well."(Faylona)

"What the heck?"(renji)

His gaze looked directly at me.

"You're strong. With you, I'm sure I'll survive."

"Oh please. I'm just a poor adventurer. Even if you put your trust in me like that, I have no way to respond."

"That's too bad."

[Really.]

Like I said, why the hell are you sympathizing with this Elf?

Whose ally are you anyway? I lightly hit Ermenhilde inside my pocket.

"In any case, the job's tomorrow. Let's take it easy today."

"That's true."

Saying that, we both left the guild.

"Do you drink?"(renji)

"Only fruit wine."

"Alright."

[No, no, why's that alright?] (T/N: this dialogue sequence doesn't sound as funny as it was in JP.-_-') I lightly hit Ermenhilde inside my pocket once again.

“Wanna go take a drink to cheer up?”(renji)

“So early in the day?”

“It’s good sometimes, to drink from early morning.”

“.....Well, it’s not like I have anything else to do so why not.”

[Oi.]

While hearing Ermenhilde’s voice, we started walking.

“You’re pretty relaxed even before such a big battle.”(elf)

“Is that so?”

Goblin subjugation isn’t that rare in this world. And with Souichi and others involved, there’s no way we’d lose.

I just have to do my job. Well, I might not get to do anything as well, but there’s a chance I might have to do something. If there is something like that, I just have to do it. It’s that easy. Together with Ermenhilde.

“Contrary to your appearance, you’re quite the bigshot eh?”(elf) “I’m exactly as I look. Just a humble adventurer who can be found anywhere.”

[.....Oh god, this drunkard.]

Chapter 18: The GodSlayers (2)

The atmosphere before a battle. Tension that stabbed the body and the heaviness of being closer to death.

While being illuminated by the light of the campfire lit for warmth that was surrounded by the adventurers, I was breathing deeply. Such an atmosphere was enveloping my body.

My chest was in pain as if it was tightening, as if it was being stabbed by a small needle.

I gazed at the surrounding adventurers. They were all youths in the their latter teens. There were some even younger kids as well. But that wasn't really unusual.

But maybe, the ones around me were still not used to such battles—-it might even be their first time. Thinking like that, I breathed deeply again.

Now, we'll be fighting. With Goblins. Along with numerous adventurers. Against countless goblins. A battle to the death.

There were those who were calmed by the fact that there were many comrades and then there were those who afraid of the fact that they'll be fighting an incredible number of goblins. They participated due to their youthful enthusiasm but were now getting scared just before it actually started.

They looked similar to the old me. I gently patted Ermenhilde's rim inside my pocket.

[What happened?]

"Just a little nervous."

[.....Don't say it so openly.]

I'm used to fighting goblins. I have fought them many times. Killed countless of them. In the plains, caves, inside forests, within cities.

But that doesn't mean I'll stop getting scared anymore. Especially, when the comrades I have to entrust my back to—-those that'll fight with me

are so nervous, their nervousness was transmitted to me as well.

Looking up at the sky, the shining sun will soon reach its peak. Just a little more till the operation starts.

The participants were, approximately 50 people who could only fight in close combat like me. Magicians and Archers were approx 30. Leaving the Magic City Ofan, we were currently encamped approx 1Km south of the city.

Here, the goblins won't be able to directly cause damage to the city and their movements could be seen from the defensive walls of the city as well. If any movement was seen they had been prepared to inform us through smoke signals.

And the goblins were—

"What a view. What a great view it is."

[Yeah right. It's disgusting.]

In my line of sight, in the middle of the plains was a huge group of earthen coloured goblins. Their distance was around 1Km away from us. There was enough distance that one wouldn't see them if he didn't strain their eyes.

RIght now, they are probably greedily devouring the meat we spread around for them there as lure. As a living being, it was enough to make you feel unpleasant. But to not even think of taking that food away back to their dwelling, I guess they really are just wild beasts.

Their number was more than 200. Probably close to 250 or something. We were only 80 so it'll be around three goblins for everyone.

There really is a lot of them.

And I ended up feeling that something was behind all this. Goblins do have a tendency to swarm but this number isn't small enough to be called just a group. Simply speaking, though higher number may equal more power but when the number is too big there will definitely be a need for a commander/leader.

Adventurers who are used to goblins should have already sensed that as well. That this situation was abnormal.

"I feel like I have been getting involved in too much trouble recently."

3 months back, an Ogre suddenly appeared in a village. 2 weeks back, there was that black Orc that could use the Demon God's flames.

And this time, a group of 200+ goblins. And I am willingly getting involved in this so I can't really complain much either.

I wonder how Souichi and Aya are right now? Thinking that, i looked towards the place where the magicians had gathered.

7 students have participated from the Albana Magic Academy. Souichi, Aya, and there was even Miss Francesca there. With Souichi and Aya as the lead, the students had gathered with the others just a while back.

Those 2 had become totally used to this so, they seemed rather bold or should I say, relaxed. The rest 5 of them were nervous enough that it showed on their faces. They're noble children. It should be the first time they'd be taking part in such a battle.

The scale of this battle wasn't unusual when the Demon God was still active but even then, only trained and veteran adventurers and knights took part in such battles. Students and nobles were protected by their parents.

By the way, I haven't greeted them yet. They shouldn't be aware of my presence either.

In Ermenhilde's words I'm being too difficult. I am aware of that as well.

"Are you fine?"

"Ueeh? Yes."

I spoke to the adventurer beside me who had a blue face.

He must be in his teens. Looks the same age as Souichi. Well, Souichi is child-faced or rather, looks much younger than his actual age though.

Turning into a handsome guy in just one year damnit. He also seems to have grown taller than the last time I saw him but it still seems lesser than other men his age.

I'll make fun of him later, definitely.

He had been always saying that he wanted to become more manly yet became more androgynous looking instead. He did have a cute type of face from the start but it seems to have become more refined as well.

Even Aya looked more manly than Souichi. Leading the students with Souichi, she looked only straight while walking with a puffed up chest.

Her strong, hardened gaze was the same as back then. So much that both me and Ermenhilde spoke She hasn't changed at all at the same time.

And this adventurer who was the same age as Souichi and the others seemed like he might puke anytime now.

"Calm down. The magicians will blow them up with their magic and we'll only have to hunt the leftovers. It's an easy job."

"……I know, but….."

I guess anyone would still get scared.

Even the me, back then, was the same. While feeling nostalgic, I brought out Ermenhilde.

"Oi, boy, your name?"(renji)

"Um…Rob. Roberiano"

"Nice name. Roberiano. Rob. And all of you other who are still shaking. Look at this."(renji)

Saying that, I flicked Ermehilde with a ping.

And then catched the rotating medal.

"It's heads."

As I opened my palm, it was Head as I had proclaimed.

Not just that. I once again flicked the medal and caught it.

“It’s Heads.”

I repeated.

Again and again. Countless times. I brought out Heads.

While I did that, voices saying that I was playing a trick or was cheating some way rose.

So I let them decide whether it’ll be heads or tails and then flicked it again. Answering their calls, I brought out Heads or Tails as required.

Like I had once shown to Miss Francesca, I was simply seeing through what side it’ll be to decided how to catch it but nobody realized that.

“Next should be Heads.”

“Alright, it should be.”

Saying that, I flicked Ermenhilde again. It was Heads. A cheer rose from the onlookers.

“You guys are lucky. You were able to guess the right side of the coin everytime.”(renji)

The cheering stopped and it became silent again.

“That’s why it’ll be fine. Nobody will die. You’ll definitely live.”(renji)

I put Ermenhilde back inside my pocket.

The trick was over. There was no fear inside the eyes of that adventurer anymore.

That’s how it should be. This is all I can do right now. I could only do such a ‘trick’ for them.

“Don’t get worked up due to mere Goblins. Think about surviving more than killing goblins. Protect the backs of your comrades. If you do so, nobody will die.”(renji)

[You’re being unusually talkative today.]

I shrugged and answered Ermenhilde’s somewhat happy voice.

It's not like I'm thinking of something special. I simply don't want anyone to die.

I don't even know their names. Only for today, we'll fighting together. Their many people like that after we came into this world. And, also many who died among them as well.

That's why, I don't want them to die. The Demon God was subjugated. The world will be at peace from now on. That's why, I don't want them to die in such a ridiculous way.

It's only normal to think like that. And if there is something I can do, if there is a way to remove their nervousness, if there was a way to reduce their chances of dying even a little, I will do it. I don't want to stay doing nothing.

"Just do what's normal, normally. Then, others would help you. Humans are weak alone."

To my words towards Ermenhilde, the young adventurer answered instead.

Finding it somewhat amusing, I ended up slackening my expression.

[Renji.]

Since the gazes were gathered at me, I couldn't answer so I gently patted Ermenhilde inside my pocket.

[.....That's fine. Just stay like that forever.]

What the heck's that supposed to mean?

While looking at the now livened up adventurers, I breathed a sigh.

If this is fine, then I'll stay like this forever. Drinking, carefree, leisurely, I'll enjoy my life in this world.

Looking up at the sky, the sun told that it was almost time to start.

I wonder if Souichi and the others will be fine or not?

Thinking that for a second, I renew my thoughts. Both of them were stronger than me, rather me worrying about them, they'd be worried

about me.

Let's just to do what I can do. To end this battle as fast as possible.

So that those kids don't have to fight too much.

.

.

.

.

The moment the battle began, the result was set.

The bombardment by the magicians. Fireballs that could drown many humans, Ice arrows that could pierce even Orcs, compressed Air bullets that seemed to twist the space itself. All these were fired together at the goblins. Explosion followed and blood splashes sprayed in the air. Their shrill cries reached even my ears.

That was the signal that marked the start of the battle. Several dozens of Goblins died from that opening attack and the remaining came at us.

Raising their warcries, they ran towards us. Then, the second wave came. This time, it was a rain of arrows by the archers. Once again, dozens of Goblins were killed and covered in blood.

The third wave was once again an attack by the magicians––or so it was supposed to be.

There was still distance between the goblins and us. But the third wave never came.

"What now?"

The other adventurers also looked towards the magicians to see what happened.

But, there were too many people to see clearly.

In meantime, the Goblins continued their approach. They're still much more than us close combat fighters. Probably around 200 are still left.

They kept getting closer. Soon, impatient voices started coming from the surroundings.

[Looks like something happened.]

“––This is why, I hate monster subjugation jobs.”

Are Souichi and Aya fine?

I questioned but I had no answer. For now I can only wish that nothing happened––that it was only a defect in the strategy.

[They’re coming. Now, support from arrows or magic is totally useless.]

“I know.”

Drawing my iron knife, I twirled it around my fingers.

I intended to use the GodSlaying weapon Ermenhilde if it turned into a melee so this is fine. It’s not like I’m having money troubles but––as you’d expect, in a big battle such as this, I want to use my trusty partner only.

While I was thinking that, the Goblins had closened enough that I could see their expressions. Lowering my waist slightly, I put strength into the hand holding the knife.

At the same time in the west––to the left from my point of view, an explosion occurred.

It was probably fire magic. Looking that way, I could see smoke rising. Due to the attack from the unexpected direction, I hurriedly looked towards Ofan. The signal that was supposed to come in case of any extraordinary circumstance was.....not there.

“Tch.”

[They’re coming.]

Facing to the front again due to Ermenhilde’s voice, I dodged the first attack made by a goblin and cut its neck with my knife. Then, I blocked the long sword of the goblin that attacked using the previous goblin as a shield. Blood sprayed on my face. And due to the pressure of the incoming

goblin, I ended up getting pushed backwards and was now fully drowned in this all-out melee.

The figure of the young adventurer was no longer beside me. Was he also swallowed up in this melee or was he crushed by the wave of goblins? But i did not have the composure to worry about that.

I grabbed one of the goblins trying to ignore and pass through me and ripped its neck.

Approximately 200 goblins. They were literally 4 times more in numbers than us. Even though they were mere goblins, facing so many head on couldn't even be called a proper battle.

"Ermenhilde!"

I called its name but the manifesting jade coloured magical energy was very weak.

I ended up clicking my tongue and gripped the long sword created out of magical energy. The blade was of silver colour completely different from the jade coloured blade. It was no better than a normal iron sword. Light, sturdy and sharp. It was just a normal weapon. Sheathing the iron knife, I held the long sword with both hands.

Slashing the sword, I tore open the body of the goblin coming from the front. Its legs stopped and guts spewed out. But that was also crushed by other goblins in the very next instant. Let alone clicking my tongue, while cursing badly inside my mind, I swung the sword again.

Even the body from the different world transfer compensation was weak. Only one of the 7 covenants had been cleared.

"Are Aya and others alright!?"

[Before that, worry about yourself first.]

The momentum of their attack lessened, and they completely surrounded me.

.....Joking aside, there's literally no one beside me. In such a condition, I could feel cold sweat flowing down my spine.

From the sounds of clashing swords, I could tell that there were others fighting. AT least we weren't annihilated already.

"Fucking hell!"

I cursed.

I don't know how many are there behind me but there were 3 goblins in front of me. But before they could jump at me, a sound of explosion came. And then a howl.

It wasn't a shrill sound like the goblins. It was deeper, beast-like, monstrous howl. And then another explosion.

"___"

[An Ogre?]

At the same time, I slashed away the Goblin jumped at me with a battleaxe.

I had no time to relax.

Yet in that one single moment, I looked towards the source of that howl —-the 5m tall Ogre.

It's characteristic one horned head was nowhere to be seen and was falling down on its knees.

[Taking down an Ogre in two shots. Not bad Aya.]

"As usual, she's ridiculous."

While restraining the goblins, I talked to Ermennhilde.

Fighting an Ogre-class monster, I need to have at least 5 of the covenants cleared to face it properly, yet she could take it down with just 2 attacks. It's really not laughable.

I really think I should have also wished the goddess to let me also use magic. It's a fantasy different world after all.

For the time being, i relaxed confirming that Aya was alright. To be able to kill an Ogre that easily, Aya should be the only one that can do such a thing among all the ones present here. Well, there might a

talented student in the Academy with the same level of talent as Aya but I doubt there'd be many with the same cheat levels of magical energy granted by the goddess.

"Maybe I should have also wished to be able to use magic or something."

[.....]

Locking my sword with the goblin's short sword, I took out my knife with my left ahnd and cut open its belly.

The goblin stopped moving from that and I used my long sword to block the attack coming from behind to surprise me. Taking a few steps back, I ended up stumbling due to something a lost my posture slightly. Using that something as a cushion, I rolled and then stabbed with the long sword like a pole weapon.

How many have I taken down already? While thinking that, I felt something lukewarm on my left arm. First I thought it was Goblin blood but that wasn't it.

Looking beside me, a human's corpse was lying on the ground. It must be this guy on which I stumbled. His face looks familiar. The one I talked to—it was, Rob.

[Renji.]

"I know."

I slashed away the Goblin that aimed at me while I was getting up and split its body in two.

The different world transfer Cheat was now increasing in effect. Ermenhilde's sharpness increased. The silver blade now showed a jade-coloured design as well.

"That makes two. Fuck!"

Fucking damnit! I once again cursed inside my mind.

Until someone gets in danger, until someone is not sacrificed.....I cannot fight.

That reality of that fact was extremely heavy. [A friend's death] had been cleared.

I looked at the surrounding goblins. Maybe they are being cautious against me, they aren't trying to use just numbers to overpower me.....not yet at least.

[It really is weird.]

"Ahn?"

[The Ogre was defeated, so many of their fellow goblins have been killed. Still they show no sign of fear.]

Slashing the silver sword, I beheaded another goblin. Unlike before, it cut through till its bone with no resistance at all and even cut away the leather armour.

If I could fight like this from the start—-no, if all my covenants were released from the start, would that boy still be alive?

Thinking that, I could only sigh. I'm thinking unnecessary things. For now, I should just swing my sword to survive. Thinking anything else is useless.

I turned towards the nearby goblins. For some reason, the goblins who hadn't retreated even after the Ogre was killed, took a step back.

"—-ruuah!!!"

Without any form, it was a simple rough attack. Its long sword broke and was cut apart from the shoulder.

The goblin who attacked my defenceless back, I simply used intution to hit him away with the handle of my sword. I could feel its bones breaking. The warmth of its flesh and pulse of its innards. All that was felt through my arm, which was disgusting.

Turning back, I stabbed my iron knife into its forehead. More goblins jumped from behind me. Turning again—-before I could swing my sword, they were pierced by arrows.

"Are you alright!?"(elf)

“Yeah, somehow.”

It was the Elf guy who had supported me.

Even though the snipers should be in a different direction....

Well, it turned into such a battle, the strategy has already completely collapsed anyway.

“Why did the third wave of support not come?”(renji)

“Orcs and Ogre were summoned out of nowhere. The Brave is currently facing the Demon.”

[Demon? Why would demons be.....]

“Was it also that demon who gathered the monsters?”(renji)

“So it said. To lure out the Heroes apparently.”

A pretty crude strategy.

If it can summon monsters, it must be a middle or high class demon. But, it lacks in the brains department apparently.

If it wants to beat the Brave, goblins and Ogres won’t be of any help. They’ll need a monster strong enough against which Souichi wouldn’t be able to win at least.

For example—the Demon Lord.

While I thought that, suddenly a huge magic circle appeared on the ground covering the whole area.

I looked below— Scarlet coloured magical energy was Aya’s colour. And the magic circle created by it was shining brightly.

“Wh, What!?”(elf)

“She really doesn’t know how to control her power. Seriously.”

“What!!?”

The Elf beside me was really panicked for once.

The power of a Hero. The magic of the Grand Magus. If she had been using that from the very start, there would have been no sacrifices at all.

But if she had done that, the adventurers would not get the chance to earn much. I guess, both the guild and the Academy must have told her to not take part actively.

But as a result, numerous victims were born. That boy—-Rob also died.

[Renji.]

“I know.”

The next moment, sharp roots burst out of the ground and skewered the goblins everywhere.

They died after being pierced by the roots in the arms, legs, body and the head.

That girl really makes quick work of even so many goblins. Opponents against whom I was fighting desperately, she killed them in an instant.

This is a God Slayer. This is the power of a Hero.—-the power of the cheat given by the Goddess. Unimaginable strength that’d make everyone envious of it.

But I don’t have it. The power to protect many, to save them. Cheers rose from various places. It seems there are still many alive.....I’m really glad for that.

[Only the demon remains now.]

Well, even that should be easy to deal with SOuichi there.

Moving through the skewered bodies of the goblins, I moved towards the place where the magicians were fighting.

For some reason, the elf came after me.

“What?”(renji)

“Where are you going?”(elf)

“.....I was thinking of at least seeing this demon once with my own eyes.”

I doubt there’s anything there for me to do.

Still, I want to witness it. The end of this battle. The face of that demon.

Demons. Monsters with intelligence that live in the Abenelm continent. They understand human tongue and are even said to wiser than humans.

Those guys, don't normally leave the continent. The last time they came, the Royal Capital had been half destroyed. It was soon after we had been summoned. The reason was to destroy the new hope of the humans or something.

But this time? The Brave—-it was to lure out Souichi or so it had said. But what after luring him out? A mere demon, could it summon the Demon Lord? That's impossible.

Then,

"I see."

More monsters were summoned. The empty space fluctuated, took shape, got color, and became a full body.

Ogre. A Black Ogre. One that was even bigger than normal Ogres had been summoned.

I had seen this Ogre. Or rather, I had fought something very similar just recently—-That Black Orc. It's giving off the same feeling as that.

Without even glancing t the goblins, I ran. The Black Ogres swung its fist.

It was blasted by magic but it remained unharmed. Was its skin that hard or was it resistant to magic. If its the former, even I'll have trouble with it. I thought while running.

"Ermenhilde."

[Yeah.]

"Lend me your strength."

[.....With pleasure, Milord.] (T/N: Ermenhilde usually uses 'Aruji' for master when not calling Renji by name but here it uses 'Goshujinsama' which has a different connotation.)

Now, where the hell are you learning all these words?

While having my cheeks cramp from being called like that, the silver sword turned back into jade magical energy. And then––I gripped the Jade coloured Divine Sword in my hand.

Jade coloured blade, a golden handle. The Elf who had been running by my side looked at this sword.

“You.....”

“What. It’s just a normal sword fund anywhere.”(renji)

[As if I’d let a weapon like me exist everywhere.]

“Not a swo—You’re not a weapon, you’re my partner.”

[.....]

I ran. Faster than before.

The Ogre swung its fist. Before it could hit the ground, I threw the Divine Sword and it stabbed into its flank.

Due to the sense of pain maybe, it roared loudly. The Ogre, Souichi, the demon, Aya who was about to get smashed by the Ogre, and every surrounding adventurer, all turned to focus at me who threw the sword.

“This is embarrassing.”

[.....How about trying to act a bit more sensibly for once? Seriously.]

But with this––

[With this, 5 of the covenants have been cleared.]

I can fight.

Chapter 19: The GodSlayers (3)

The fist that was swung struck the ground with a force enough to smash the earth.

Even though such a reckless attack should have made it show a lot of openings, there really was no chance to counter back. Black skin that felt like steel. But I think that it was actually even tougher than steel.

The moment that fist struck the ground it did create a small earthquake like effect in the surroundings. That stopped those moving towards it to counter attack and the rest who still jumped at it while shouting were deflected away by its other arm.

It seemed ridiculous but it was totally like an Ogre. Truly an attack completely dependent on brute strength.

Normally speaking, an Ogre has an height of about 5m, dark red skin and a single horn on its head. Its limbs are similar to a human's, but its fist could split even a rock in half. They rarely group together, at most 2-3 would stay together.

They have a wild temperament that makes them fight even with those of their own race and even treat goblins and Orcs as prey. Ogres were considered the biggest threat on this continent ruled by humans.....you could even call them [tyrants] of sorts.

But this monster rampaging in front of me was even bigger than a normal ogre at a height of 6m. It fist could smash the earth itself, let alone rocks. It's jet black skin was hard and was easily withstanding the magic attacks and arrow support without doing anything.

It's appearance was that of an ogre but felt like a totally different monster. It's similar to that black Orc that could use magic.

––It's similar to that of the arm of the Demon God.

"Tch."

[.....It's difficult to pierce through.]

While hiding my face till upto my nose with my mantle, I clicked my tongue. Even Ermenhilde seemed to be slightly irritated.

The cloud of dust was really harsh and it made even breathing difficult. Another problem was the screams and shouts of the adventurers surrounding that black Ogre. Loud voices end up stimulating Ogres. It's difficult to make sure that the Ogre doesn't switch target to these adventurers.

And also, the Demon supporting this Ogre.

Grey hair that reached his waist and wings like that of a Falcon. A tail grew out of his back at the end of which was a mouth with sharp fangs. That in itself was also a weapon.

The sclera of his eyes was slightly muddy black and his pupils were red. His own teeth looked similar to humans. The colour of his skin was pale-bluish and he was wearing clothes similar to humans as well. Even though he looked like a human, he was a completely different existence.

It was race that had features like wings tails and above all, incredible magical energy not possessed by normal humans. That was indeed a Demon.

Flying by putting magical energy into its wings, and releasing magical energy that seemed to distort the atmosphere was enough proof for that.

Magical energy that could be seen by naked eyes was possessed only by us other world travellers and Demons.

"Can't we shoot him down with something?"(renji)

"I've been trying but he always dodges the one-shot types....."(aya)

"And the stronger ones?"

"......That'll end up dragging the surrounding adventurers as well."

I see.

Aya, who I was protecting behind me, said that with a regretful voice.

She won't say it directly but its clear that the surrounding adventurers

are becoming a restraint for her. Me and Souichi could quickly get away from the Demon and the Ogre the moment Aya used her magic.

All of this is the fault of that Black Ogre.

There are moments where it makes dull movements. Every adventurer tries to use that moment to try and attack. That certainly is an opening but it's useless if your attacks don't work on it.

It's probably intentional I think. By doing that, it can limit our movements––and also block Aya's magic.

I can't believe that an Ogre would have that much intelligence but it would be normal considering a demon is controlling it.

"––Renji-niichan, what do we do?"(souichi)

Souichi who was fighting the Demon came near me and asked with a troubled expression. In fact I want to ask that you know?

Aya held a wooden, magician-like staff in her hands and Souichi held a beautiful transparent bluish blade.

It's the sword that's referred to as the Goddess' Holy Blade by everyone. Even though it was actually given to him by the Spirit God by contracting his whole body to a spirit.....The Goddess was totally irrelevant here.

At most, the Goddess had acted like a middleman and talked to the Spirit God or so I've heard, but that's all there was to it. It should be called the Spirit God's Holy Blade in fact. But even then, everyone else made up stories thinking that since we were summoned by the Goddess and were provided Divine Protection by her, so the Holy Sword should also be given by her.

I really don't want to know anymore of an adult's foul mind. In fact I find it admirable that the spirits didn't come to say anything even after knowing this.. Well, they can't really talk though.

"It's simple. We strike down that Demon first. Then, we kill the black Ogre."

This black ogre and the previous Black Orc, there are lot of things I

want to ask that Demon about.

Why could I feel the Demon God from these two? And above all, why can a normal Demon summon a underling of the Demon God.

How should I say this, no matter how I look at it, this Ogre is much stronger than the Demon himself. The hierarchical order should be reverse. Intelligence wasn't important here. The [Demon God] was that special to the demons. Well it's obvious considering he's their God.

And that is why it was too weird that this Demon could control an underling of the Demon God.

"Okay. Let's fight as usual eh?"(souichi)

I really don't think a 18yr old guy should be saying that while smiling. To kill and whatnot.

Well, it's considered normal in this world though.....But as someone who knows children of that world, I can't get used to it. In fact are Souichi and others normal considering they got used to this world?.....

While I was thinking that, Souichi ran once again to pull the Demon's attention to himself. He looked like a single shadow. He moved with such a speed that could only make one recognise him as a black shadow.

That speed was so fast that I could only follow him barely even with 5 of the covenants fulfilled. If one was to tell me to cross swords with him now, it'd be impossible for me.

Souichi, who closed into the Ogre in an instant, slashed at its thighs. But it only resulted in sparks flying and there was no blood loss. Just how tough is that skin? The jade Divine Sword was still stuck in its flank.

Against anything related to the [Demon God], it seems the God Slaying weapon Ermenhilde was more effective than any holy sword with divine protection of spirits or gods. That had been only proved an year back.

Different from the one I threw, I held another sword in my right hand again.

".....Renji-san?"(aya)

“Hm?”

While I was aiming at the Ogre who was fixated at Souichi, a voice called me from behind.

That voice was very weak-sounding different from the Aya I knew. As I answered without turning back, a sigh came from my pocket.

We’re in the middle of a fight after all, I don’t want to loosen my guard. I want to quickly end this.

Souichi will take attention and I’ll deal the finishing blow. It was the same strategy we used against both the Demon God and its descendants. Well, it wasn’t really something complicated to be called a strategy though.

“How many of your covenants have been cleared till now?”

“4.”

“.....”

Was that too easy to see through?

The number of covenants cleared. They were very simple things. I who didn’t possess magical energy would receive magical energy from Ermenhilde with every clearance. I create weapons with that. Basically, the more of the seals have been released, the more stronger the weapon I create.

For Aya who is knowledgeable in magecraft, she should be able to figure out the number of clearances from my magical energy. And also, which of the covenants have been cleared as well.

The 12 comrades that were with me are well aware of the conditions in which my power is released. The conditions to clear the 7 covenants, that is. What I have to do, and what I need to sacrifice.

[My will to fight], [To protect someone], [Against the Demon God], [Protecting a Promise]. These 4 should be the ones that Aya should be aware that have been cleared. But my magical power was clearly at the level of 5 cleared. The remaining one——she should be able to guess that

considering the situation. Even though she's 10 yrs younger than me, she has a good head on her shoulders. She must have ascertained the situation already. That's why, I simply shrugged my shoulders.

[Let's finish this already, Renji.]

"Yeah."

I took Ermenhilde's help and answered. I don't intend to start talking here. We both know that there's no room for talk while in a battle.. Even if the opponent is mere fodder——if you loosen your guard, your friends will die. We were too well aware of that.

I put strength into the hand gripping the Divine Sword. I looked around and——

"——Do it, Aya."

"Yes."

The moment she stabbed her staff in the ground, a scarlet magic circle appeared.

With the Ogre at its centre, it even covered all the surrounding adventurers as well; it was that big. To activate such a large scale magic, it would take numerous Elite magicians even of the royal knight's order not to mention the time taken for preparation. There was no magician like Aya who could use it instantly and by herself.

Reversely speaking, even those who didn't know that Aya could use it would be convinced thinking that if its one the GodSlayers, they can do it.

Seeing the magic activate, the adventurers raised voices of surprise and bewilderment.

[Hurry and run. Or you'll get dragged into it.]

At the same time, Ermenhilde sent her [voice] into everyone's head.

Adventurers who didn't understand the situation started to look around thinking that a magician was using a spell. I could only sigh at that.

[I'm saying, if you don't want to get dragged into a fight of GodSlayers,

hurry up and run away!]

Once again, Ermenhilde used her [voice].

And this time finally, the adventurers started to retreat outside of Aya's magic circle.

"Now then,"

"——let's go on a rampage as usual."

At the same time as Aya pulled out her staff, the magic circle began to shine even more brightly. The shining light seemed very sacred and the black Ogre stood out inside of it.

"Do you even know how much I was looking forward to today?"(aya)

Saying that, the magical energy inside the circle came together.

The aim was not the Ogre, it was to take down the most troublesome Demon first.

There's a chance he might run away the moment we defeat the Ogre, they're clever like that. And he might also use the surrounding adventurers as shield as well.

It was a fact after all that the black Ogre was purposefully creating a situation to make the adventurers believe that they could fight as well.

That's why first of all, we need to get those adventurers to move away from here. Nect, deploy the magic circle on the ground to make it believe that our aim was the Ogre.

"Fall down already."

Speaking with a heavy voice filled with killing intent, the next moment, the Demon was being cautious of the magic from the ground fell from the sky.

What she had controlled was gravity. The magic circle was for preparation.

In the first place, using a magic that could be recognised was always a last resort. It was one thing if it was the time when we had started our

journey when she wasn't used to using magic but right now, Aya could have beat the demon even without the use of the magic circle.

At the same time, I also ran towards the Ogre.

With 5 of the covenants clear, my physical abilities were at an extreme and I covered 20m in a single breath.

Souichi once again slashed at the Ogre's legs. Once again, only sparks flew.

At the same time, I cut at its other leg. Here, there was no resistance and I cut its leg away from the ankle.

It raised a scream and the Ogre fell down as it lost its one leg.

It tried to support itself with its 2 arms but the moment its arms were about to touch the ground, the earth in that area alone disappeared. Aya had dug a hole with magic. Both its arms buried into the ground and with a heavy zuun sound, it struck the earth face first.

"fuu."

The Demon was lying on the ground crushed by gravity and the Ogre was buried in the earth with one leg cut off.

Now that both had become unable to fight any longer, I breathed a sigh.

Just like that, I first cut off the Ogre's head. The Divine Sword cut through its neck with no resistance and the head rolled away.

"Can I retire already?"

[It seems like it'll get more troublesome later on though, can you act like you don't notice what's happening all the time?]

"……Tch."

Dropping my shoulders, I clicked my tongue.

Sorry, Rob. Roberiano. This is the most I can do.

I remembered the face of the young dead adventurer. I didn't really promise that I'd protect him but the fact that he had to die at such a young age pierced my heart a little. On the battlefield, killed by the likes

of goblins. Even though he wasn't really different from Souichi and the others……his life had only just begun.

But this is what a battlefield is like, it can't be helped. I don't want to think like that, to use the battlefield as an excuse, I could only sigh.

"Now then."

[All that remains is the mastermind behind this.]

Can we even call him a mastermind? I really can't think of it that way. While hearing Ermenhilde's words, I walked towards the Demon trapped in the cage of gravity.

If that Demon thought that he could defeat Souichi and others with just an Ogre, even if it had become the Demon God's descendant, then he's just an idiot.

Even without me, those 2 would have defeated them sooner or later. I trust them that much.

That's what a GodSlayer is, a Hero. Receiving absolute trust and meet their expectations is a Brave.

"Renji-niichan!!"

"Ou."

Souichi was keeping an eye on the Demon on the ground but he still raised his one hand to wave at me. To answer him, I also raised one of my hands and went to him.

With pan he high fived me. I opened and closed my palm repeatedly to lessen the pain.

……hitting with full strength. That really hurt damnit…..

"It seems you were in good health."

"That's my line. Also, everyone was really worried you know?"

"ugh……."

I averted my eyes as he looked up at me.

No, well, I guess it was my bad that I suddenly disappeared but.

[Tell him more, Souichi.]

“Eru-san as well. Long time no see.”

[Ah, you guys are so courteous and polite.]

“.....That feels like saying that someone doesn’t stay polite you know?”(renji)

[That’s exactly what I’m saying.]

“Even like this, I do put an effort to stay courteous and polite at all time though.”

Saying that, I looked towards the ground.

The wings were in totally bad shape and both his feet and left leg were bent in an impossible direction. It hurt just looking at him.

“Oi.”(renji)

When I raised my voice, he looked at me with a hate filled gaze.

The 13 GodSlayers.

Even among them, I who had directly killed the Demon God was hated the most by the Demons. I’m completely detested by them. Well, that can’t be helped though.

I am the guy who killed the God they worshipped after all. It’s only obvious that I’ll be hated.

I lay the jade green sword at his neck. Now that the black Ogre was dead, only 4 of the covenants were cleared—-no, only 3. There’s no need to protect someone in this situation now after all.

The fact that the blade had lost its previous shine of magical energy was a proof of that.

“Yamada Renji—-!!”(demon)

“Yeah, I’m Yamada Renji. So, why the hell can a demon like you control a descendant of the Demon God?”

Ignoring is hate filled gaze, I questioned.

I may have done something bad. Killing a God, even if to save the world, may not have been something that should be forgiven. Especially for those Demons who worshipped him.

But, that doesn't mean I'll accept their hate.

I'm not such a great human who can do something like that after all, I'm not tolerant enough for that.

What will you do after saving the world?

Travelling around the world, becoming a bridge between humans and demi-humans might not be bad. I might try to fix relations with the enemy demons as well.

In fact, there are Demons who don't think badly of humans. They are a complete minority though.

"Is Sherfa involved in this?"(renji

The name I spoke was of the Demon Lord. Demon Lord Sherfa. The most influential person on the Abenelm continent next to the Demon God.

A monster that could fight at par with even Souichi who had awakened as a Hero.

When I spoke that name, the demons gaze became even more filled with hatred and glared at me.

"Wa——that naive woman, there's no way she could take such an action!!"

"Oioi. She is your ruler you know."

Well, I agree that she's naive/soft Demon Lord though.

For a Demon Lord, Sherfa does have much too soft of an image. She's always fair and square, hates taking hostages, and she herself said that she likes humans. After the previous Demon Lord died, she came to us to even brag proudly that she has succeeded the position. But that doesn't

mean she was human-like though.

Strength is everything in the Demon continent so whoever is strong automatically becomes right or so they say. She's a type that swing her fist before speaking. Truly very demon-like. She still claims to like humans though.

"Like I care. A demon lord that doesn't try to revive the Demon God-sama can't be called a Demon Lord."(demon)

[Revive the Demon God.]

This is the first I'm hearing of this. I ended up tilting my head at that. By the way he is speaking, it's as if they can revive the Demon God at any time.

"What do you mean? The Demon is dead. Renji-niichan killed —-"(souichi)

"hmph. You think I'll speak all that? C'mon, hurry up and kill me."(demon)

"Hah?"

"There's only death for the loser. I'll be killed if I return anyway."

No, there's no way you'd have won with such military forces in any case, I could only feel amazed.

Even though they're clever at weirdly specific things, their war-related stuff is the same as one year ago.

"As if I care."(renji)

Saying that, the jade sword turned to magical energy and disappeared.

"Aya, I'm done so you can stop now."(renji)

"Yes."

The gravity prison holding the Demon also disappeared with that. Maybe feeling lighter due to the cage suddenly disappearing, the demon also fainted.

Revival of the Demon God eh?

While seeing Aya walk towards us, I sighed.

“Seems like trouble again……I really hate this.”(renji)

“Renji-niichan does get involved in all sorts of troubles don’t you?”(souichi)

Souichi said that sounding somewhat happy/amused.

As for me, I really, seriously want to be pardoned from all this.

“Trouble comes to me. Also, stop speaking like I intentionally get involved in trouble, will you?”(renji)

“Eh?”(souichi)

“…….huh?”(renji)

[What the hell are you saying suddenly?]

Why did I get a question mark in answer to that? I really do intend to avoid trouble you know? But trouble always seems to find me instead. If this is also a part of the Different world transfer compensation (cheat) given to us, I can only despair.

Also, Ermenhilde’s usual amazed, fed up words was digging into my chest.

Did I do something to make it mad? While I was thinking that, Aya came and stood beside me.

“……”

“……”

“……”

[…..Why are all 3 of you not speaking anything?]

Well, who knows?

For some reason, Aya seemed nervous, so me and Souichi also ended up keeping quiet.

Ermenhilde, as usual, couldn’t read the mood at all.

“um, long time no see, Renji-san. Thank you for saving me back

then."(aya)

"n, long time no see, Aya. I promised didn't I? That I'll save you if you were in danger."

Saying that, I pointed my palm towards Aya. When I did that, Aya, somewhat happily, also struck my palm with hers making a pachin sound.

When we travelled together back then, whenever we succeeded in something or if something good happened, we always high fived. Feeling nostalgic, I also smiled.

I had been thinking about how to meet them and what to talk but with just this, I feel happy that I met them.

"You seem tired but, did something happen?"(renji)

"Ah, no, nothing....."(aya)

She seemed happy just now but suddenly hung her head again. Did something happen, I wonder?

Or maybe I did something bad?

Thinking till there, I remembered that I had not sent even a letter to her in the past one year.

Is that it? I racked my brain to think of way to talk to her. Aya was still hanging her head down and squirming bashfully while playing with her hair.

Both her height and hair had grown longer compared to last time I saw her and had become more womanly giving her a fresh look. But I feel like I'll get yelled at if I say that out loud so I don't.

In the end, we 3 stood like that silently without speaking anything till the other adventurers came back.

.....is such a reunion okay?

Chapter 20: The GodSlayers (4)

Soon after the army of goblins summoned by the demon had been subjugated, we, the normal adventurers, didn't return directly to Ofan and remained to deal with the corpses of the Goblins.

Taking off any equipment that seemed useful, we collected the corpses in one single place. To take care of them at once.

If we had left them like that, wild beasts or some other goblins would have been attracted to it instead. If that happened, we'd have to once again group up to subjugate them again which would be a pain.

[Why do even us have to do this……]

"Well that's, I'm also just an adventurer after all."

[…..haah.]

It's for the people. But even so, Ermenhilde was low on tension.

I have only heard sighs from the morning. Well, it's not like I don't understand its feelings.

Just a moment ago, with Ermenhilde in my hand, we rampaged while fighting a black Ogre that had the atmosphere of the Demon God. My cover was blown. People knew that I was one of the 13 GodSlayers.

But even so, the fact that I'm mixing among the adventurers and dealing with corpses of mere goblins seems to be unacceptable to Ermenhilde. Well, it is the job of amateurs and newbie adventurers. And maybe of vagrants without any job.

But it's fine, right? If I return to the guild right now, I'll definitely get involved in something troublesome.

I doubt anyone would want this kind of tiresome job that I'm doing right now. The reward is good but it's mentally tiring. The stench the goblin corpses give off is awful. In just a day, the flesh breaks apart and the blood starts giving off an incredible stench. Above all, the corpse of the black Ogre can't be seen anywhere but there is a black blotch where it

died. And that smells a lot as well.(T/N: The author had written black orc by mistake but I'm pretty sure that's a typo since only a black ogre appeared.) "You should be fine since you don't even have a nose. Deal with it."

[That's not the problem here! For Renji, shouldn't there be a more..... suitable job?]

"I hate those though."

Above that, I'd prefer easy jobs like dealing with corpses. I'll get a reward as well. Beggars can't be choosers.

[So selfish.....and also, this isn't a troublesome job?]

"I'm just taking equipment off corpses and collecting them in a single place, you know? It's super easy."

[I wonder why, I feel like crying.]

"Well, why indeed."

While answering to Ermenhilde like that, I skilfully removed the equipment from the corpses. We never had money troubles while on our journey to defeat the Demon God but in the past one year, I have been running out of money quite a lot. When I realized that I could get a lot of money by selling off equipments gotten like this, my skill in this aspect increased instantly.

Ermenhilde would get angry saying that such a Hero doesn't exist but money is more important.

"I'm properly working, aren't I? This is better than lazing around all day I believe."

[That's normal! I'm saying, choose your jobs better!]

"I'm not so great that I'm allowed to choose jobs though."

After finishing removing the equipment, I grabbed the corpse's arm and dragged it to the place decided for gathering them all.

After doing this for almost 200 times, even such a simple work really

does get tiring. Participating along with me are around 10 more adventurers and 30 civilians of the Magic City. There are even some children here. It must be a chance for them to earn some extra money, I guess.

[If you tell them that you're one of the Heroes, won't you get better jobs automatically?]

"Not interested. I don't want to get dragged into the petty power struggles of nobles due to that. Also, I'm not very Hero-like anyway."

The title of 'Hero' will definitely attract attention.

Even now, the other adventurers are constantly glancing at me while I do my job.

I'm not ignorant enough to not know the meaning behind it but I have no intention to answer to them.

[Seriously....]

Bending beside the next corpse, I began my work again.

Ermenhilde seems to be still muttering something but I can't do anything about that.

4 Deceased, 11 severely wounded, 31 slightly wounded.

That was the numbers of victims that the vanguard had in this battle.

The deceased were all young adventurers, boys who went to the front lines—the ones I had talked to before the battle.

I remembered what I had said to them back then. I recalled the words I used to cheer them up.

'you guys are lucky'?

The moment you come on to a battlefield, luck ends there itself. To stand on the battlefield at that age, there was nothing more unfortunate than that.

And in the rear guard made up of archers and magicians. 2 Severely wounded, 17 slightly wounded. That was all. Even the severely wounded

would be able to return to their normal lives once their wounds heal. Their wounds were of the type that won't leave any after effects.

They had been ambushed by the Demon. But they had been protected by Souichi and Aya as those two had maintained the front.

.....thinking that, I could only sigh.

The gap between me and Souichi. The gap between the weakest God Slayer and the Brave or Grand Magus. The gap between a GodSlayer that cannot gain power without sacrificing others and those who could always fight at their strongest.

Saying that the level of danger at the vanguard and the rear guard is different is just an excuse. In the end, there were casualties. If it was an actual Hero—-he would have saved those dying boys. A hero definitely would have.

But instead I, let alone protect them, I used their deaths as my own power.

As a result the black Orc was defeated, and everybody started calling me a Hero again.

I was called one even in the guild this morning.

Even so, a Hero like that shouldn't even exist.

[But even so, everyone will treat you as a Hero you know?]

"Yeah and it's a pain."

Saying that, I took off the equipment from the goblin again.

"I just want to casually roam and travel around the world with you though."

[—-hmm]

"I think that's pretty amusing in itself but what about you?"

[Who knows?]

Ermenhilde's answer was very short and blunt.

After that, I kept on working as both of us stayed silent for a while.

Souichi and the others were currently talking with the mayor of the magic city regarding how to deal with the imprisoned demon.

I think they'd probably transfer him to the royal capital to interrogate him.

There are a lot of magicians in the city but very few who can actually fight. The students of the academy are in the end just students. Experienced magicians would either enter the royal knight orders or set up their own research labs.

With only that level of military force in the city, if the demon were to do something again, even if he's wounded, it'll still cause a lot of trouble. Even Souichi and the others are human, they're weak against surprise attacks. As a result, there were casualties in the recent battle as well due to a surprise attack.

That's why, they'll soon send away that demon to the Royal Capital from Ofan.

"A Demon Lord that doesn't revive the Demon God, eh?"

[––Do you hate fighting?]

The Demon God.

One of the few existences against which I can fight at full power.

The revival of the Demon God is also like the revival of my own raison d'être. I realize what Ermenhilde wants to say but I don't have the words to answer her.

The GodSlaying weapon that is Ermenhilde and the God Slayer that can literally fight at full power against only a God.

But, if you were to ask whether I want the Demon God to be revived then I can only say no. True, if that happens, I can once again fight as a 'hero' alongside my comrades.

But just like that time. In that final battle. Countless comrades had been sacrificed. Those I wanted to protect were sacrificed. Only then was

I able to protect the world.

But—-

“I hate fighting. It’s scary and painful.”

[I see.]

“I’m a coward after all.”

[That’s true.]

“.....you’re supposed to deny that, partner.”

I hate fighting. So many people get hurt. So many people become sad. So many die.

And above all—-many have to cry.

[I was excited during the fight with Demon God’s spawn.]

“I see.”

[But Renji calls me his partner rather than weapon.]

“That’s true.”

[.....Don’t deny me, Renji.]

Hearing Ermenhilde’s soft complaints, I ended up feeling happy somehow.

Filled with those feelings, I gently caressed the medal inside my pocket with my fingers.

“I refuse.”

[You’re an idiot.]

I nodded in an exaggerated manner.

“I am aware.”

[You’re a complete fool.]

Now then, let’s work hard on my job now.

I, who was working hard even while listening to Ermenhilde’s gentle abuse, might actually be a masochist.

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When I returned back to the town as the sun began to set, numerous shops lightened by magic light came into my view.

While shrinking back in discomfort due to being respectfully thanked by the guards, I wondered about what next to do.

Should I go back to the inn and sleep or should I head to the bar?

While deciding about it, I headed towards the inn for the time being anyway. When I realized a figure was in front of me.

“Yo, Souichi.”

“I have been waiting Renji-niichan. You’ve finally returned.”

[What happened Souichi. To be waiting in a place like this.]

“Well, I didn’t know which inn Renji-niichan was staying in so I decided to wait in a place from where the south gate could be seen.”

Oi Brave-sama, how free are you?

I ended up giving a tsukkomi inside my mind.

“What about the demon?”(renji)

“After that, they sent a fast horse to contact the Royal capital. SInce not just us, even Renji-niichan was involved, maybe Yuuko-san herself would come to take him.”

“uehh.”

“……She’ll get angry you know.”

That would be bad.

As someone who had been scolded many times by her during our journey, it was a common knowledge that she’s the last person you’d want to make angry.

Well, I’m the one who was always at fault though.

Taking minors to the city's 'night life', being reckless and getting hurt, teaching the kids weird things, etc.

I know the reasons aren't exactly great but I really feel that you should enjoy now that you're in a different world and all. That hasn't changed even now.

[Yuuko is really scary when angered after all.]

"She grows horns I swear, horns!"(renji)

"She might hear that you know?"(souichi)

[When that happens, Renji, put me in Souichi's safekeeping please.]

"We'll be together in both joy and pain, right partner?"(renji) As I began taking with Ermenhilde, Souichi started laughing.

"It's really nostalgic."

I shrugged my shoulders.

I have been doing this for 3 years now. Rather than nostalgic, it's become more like normal for me.

That's why I could only feel out of place at Souichi's words.

"I, for one, would prefer a more gentle and ladylike personality, you know."(renji) [Muu]

Seeing Ermenhilde harden at just those words, I laughed together with Souichi.

As usual, my partner's fun to tease.

"What about Aya and Yayoi-chan?"

"They're borrowing a restaurant."

".....There's no need to go that far."

"They're really happy though. Especially Aya."

"Hmm."

[What a half-hearted response. You'll get buried for it someday, you know?]

Will I really get buried for just that?

I doubt she's that short-tempered. Probably.

I followed Souichi as he began to walk while talking.

He's probably leading me to the restaurant.

After that fight, we separated without getting to talk much but it's nice that they aren't saying anything to me.

Well, they'll probably ask a lot now though. What I have been doing till now and whatnot. How should I avoid it? I gazed at the sky while thinking.

It's not something very cool after all, I have been literally lazing around. But I don't want to hide much from the children either. I don't intend to lie but let's dramatize it a bit instead.

"Please be gentle with Aya alright? If Renji-niichan made her angry, I'm the one who gets the bad end of it, you know?"(souichi) "That's sounds fun though."

"Oh please no....."

He says that but, Souichi himself enjoys messing around with his childhood friend.

He's really easy to understand I think. Really.

To the extent where you'd end up wondering whether there's something more between them than being just childhood friends.

"Leaving that aside, Souichi,"

"Don't leave it aside.....what is it, Renji-niichan?"

"Don't I smell? I bathed in goblin blood sprays and was dealing with their corpses as well till now after all."

"Well now that you mention it, you do."

[You're going to have dinner now right? Do you intend to go like this?]

If I actually went like this, not just Aya, even Utano-san will do

something bad to me. And I mean mentally.

"Can I return to my inn once? I want to take a bath. Need to change my clothes as well."

"Yeah. If you went with bloody clothes, I'll be the one who gets buried....."

[Well, can't you both get buried together? Happily?]

Anything but that.

It's dark, cramped and difficult to breath alone anyway.

[Maybe if that happens, Renji would also live more properly afterwards.]

"Can you please not talk like I'm not a proper human."

[It's true though, Renji.]

You say such harsh things, partner.

As I shrugged, Souichi luaghed.

"Didn't Eru-san get a bit more mellow nowadays?"(souichi) (T/n: mellow and round sound the same in japanese which'll explain the next dialogue.) "It's been round from the very start, it's a medal after all. You won't get.....fat, right?"

".....Not that way."

Souichi looked so cute as he dropped his shoulders that I started laughing.

On that, he glared at me with puffed cheeks. His actions are still really childish. Should I say, as expected of a 18yr old kid or should I say, even though he's already 18 he's still like this.

"In the beginning, it was more formal, called you Renji-sama, right?"

[.....I have no such memory.]

"Yeah, back when it was still pure and graceful."

[Should I talk about various things to Aya, Renji?]

Does it really want to deny that it ever happened? Well, it's not like I want to talk about back then much either.

I was just a company employee and was suddenly being called with a '-sama' suffix. It's an embarrassing memory.

"Talking about back then, Souichi hasn't grown much in height from back then eh?"(renji) "uu……"

[Don't mind him. For men, it's what inside you that counts Souichi.]

Wow that's harsh in its own Ermenhilde.

Being told that, Souichi only averted his gaze and sighed.

In fact, since his face is also pretty androgynous, if he grew out his hair, won't he look like Yayoi-chan?

"It must be nice for Renji-niichan to be so tall."

"I pretty average I think."

"Then I'm even below average. Even in class I'm the shortest.

[It's fine. I know a lot of good points Souichi has.]

Like I said, you aren't consoling him that way Idiot! I hit Ermenhilde from above the pocket.

I said that to change the topic but Ermenhilde seems to be dealing the final blow instead.

"Well, you'll gain height sooner I'm sure."

"I'm still drinking milk everyday by the way, you know."

So you still are?

"You sure are leading a healthy life. Well then, let's quickly go to the inn and then meet up with Aya and the others."

"……yeah. if we made her wait any longer, she'll get angry again."

[Again?]

"No, it's nothing, Eru-san."

Did she get angry at him for some reason?

Seeing the easy to understand Souichi, I feel bad but still ended up luaghing.

“You sure get along well with Aya.”

“I wonder? Well, we are childhood friends. I can somehow understand what she’s thinking.”

“Well isn’t that amazing.”

When I said that, Souichi looked up at me happily.

“Envious?”

“Well, I wonder?”

[You’re not honest, as usual.]

“Nothing like that, really.”

But––I’m really not envious, I feel that because those 2 have such a relation they can do that.

That wasn’t envy but more……jealousy.

“Well, I don’t have such a person in my life, that is.”

“What about Eru-san?”

“That’s more like we’re just stuck together.”

[……muu]

The Brave who protected his comrades. Trusted by everyone, I held very slight jealousy towards Amagi Souichi.

Hiding that, I teased Ermenhilde to change the topic.

That’s fine.

An adult that’s jealous of child 10 years younger is simply unsightly.

The comrades that fought with me died. Lost their lives.––-only then did I gain the power to fight.

Haah, I sighed inside my mind.

“Me and Aya are also the same, Eru-san.”

[.....That isn’t really consoling, Souichi.]

“It’s payback for earlier.”

I’m envious of Souichi who can smile so straightforwardly like that.

Why is it that you get better at forced smile as you become an adult I wonder?

Or is it that you become an adult when you get better at forcing your smiles?

Chapter 21: Reminiscences of the Grand Magus (1)

Fuyou Aya does not have a father.

Her parents divorced when she was in the elementary grade and was then raised fatherless.

Her mother worked in an average company and also held an average position there, thus she was often late back home. To raise her precious daughter alone, she worked even harder than before. To let her go to a good school, to let her get good education, to buy good things for her.

To do all that, she had no choice but to work. From early morning, till late night. And that not painful for her either. For her precious daughter, Aya's mother believed she could work as hard as possible.

But in doing that obviously, Aya had to spend much of her time alone. The discord between her parents. Quarrels everyday, harsh words, and the fact that they discord had a great effect on Aya's mind and heart.

She even stopped talking much to her friends at school. 'If I ended up fighting them, I'd lose even those friends'. As she started thinking like that, she started feeling fear of even trying to enter a circle of friends thinking she might anger them by saying something weird.

To speak simply, she shut herself away within herself.

Her mother did not realize that because she was looking more towards her daughter's future than her present. And Aya had been a clever girl from childhood. She ended up thinking that 'if I made mother worry, I'll only cause more trouble'.

She met her childhood friends Amagi Souichi and Yayoi 2 years after her parents divorced when they ended up coincidentally living in the apartment next to Aya's. The Amagis had moved here due to their father's job circumstances.

One day, Aya ended up returning home earlier than her mother. But on

that day she had forgotten her keys inside her own room. While sitting in front of her own apartment unable to enter, she met the Amagi siblings.

The boy known as Amagi Souichi doesn't doubt people much. He could be called a naturally good person but from an adult's point of view, his personality could be called dangerous. The place where Aya and Souichi lived was comparatively a safe place but it wasn't like dangerous people didn't live there. Souichi's personality was dangerous enough that he might get easily lured with the temptation of candies by some suspicious person.

His sister Yayoi was better in that regards. From their parent's point of view, they felt that the position of the brother and younger sister might actually be the opposite. But still though, Souichi was the older brother and Yayoi was the younger sister.

When Yayoi was in trouble, Souichi would be by her side. When she wanted something, the brother would always be the tolerant one. Whether it be sweets, or toys. If Yayoi could smile just by Souichi enduring instead, that was enough for Souichi. He was happy with that. Aya was a single child so she was always jealous of those two's relationship. The reason why she was able to get close to the Amagi siblings so quickly was probably because she saw Souichi closely and could understand him.

On the day she forgot her keys as well, without any doubt, he invited Aya into his own room.

They ate sweets together, drank juice, played games. And after that got scolded somewhat by his parents, though he still doesn't know why even now. That's because he simply believes that if a person is in trouble he has to help that person.

Aya found that natural belief of his to be too dazzling. She didn't have a father. Her mother wasn't home most of the time either due to work. It was probably inevitable that she got close to the Amagi siblings.

Maybe because Souichi had a timid and soft hearted personality, Aya ended up developing a strong personality. By the time they were in the

upper grades of elementary school, she started pulling Souichi around with Yayoi everywhere with her.

Souichi and Yayoi's parents also found the children's relationship to be a happy thing. Her friends in school also increased. After that, Aya became prettier than most of the girls her age. Not cuter but prettier. Maybe because her mother was also a beauty, she must have inherited it in her genes. But that didn't mean that she gathered over attention.

Due to her parent's divorce, Aya had become more sensitive towards the subtleties of human relationships. Avoiding anything that might make others hold jealousy towards her, she lived keeping her surroundings in check. It was an unconscious way to avoid getting herself hated by others but thanks to that, she was able to make a lot of friends.

Especially, the one who opened Aya's heart was Souichi's father. Maybe because she didn't have a father, Aya might be overlapping Souichi's father as [her own father] as well.

But, the one who didn't like that relation was Aya's mother. She worked hard for her daughter, earned a lot money for her only to see her daughter's face. But the one her daughter smiled towards was not her but a neighbour who was practically a nobody.

Few after the divorce, she couldn't stay by her daughter's side only because she was working for her daughter's sake. But to expect a elementary schooler to understand that was wrong. Aya did understand that inside her head but her feelings simply couldn't agree.

Rather than her mother who was away, it was obvious that she'd be more open to the Amagi couple who were by her side always.

There was no discord, but their conversations lessened and the time they spent together further lessened and the time she spent at her job increased.

By the time Aya reached middle school, her mother was practically living at her workplace. She stopped coming much to her apartment.

Aya stopped being in her own room and spent more in time next door.

Since Yayoi was also there, there was no problem even if she stayed the night.

On reaching middle school she began recognising Souichi as a boy of same age. He might have been her first love even. Or maybe she was simply embarrassed during puberty. Aya wasn't sure of that even now.

After becoming aware of Souichi, her eyes followed him and her heart beat faster when she talked to him. Due to embarrassment the gap between them grew a bit. Souichi who didn't really care about that still went close to Aya and often got scolded by her.

When he asked his parents for advice, it was declared that he was at fault instead at which he could only tilt his head in confusion.

The boy Amagi was unable to understand that elementary school and middle school was different. Aya was his childhood friend. A close freind. One with whom he did not want to worsen his relationship with.

In fact, Aya would only increase his distance with Souichi due to that but in the end, well, they lived next to each other. The distance was not more than the distance between souichi's room and Yayoi's room. It was truly a charming thing.

Yayoi would look at those happily and somewhat enviously. She didn't like that her beloved brother only paid attention to Aya but she loved Aya as well. Yayoi who more perceptive in that aspect even more than Aya who was an year older, would often tease Aya.

Aya's relationship with her mother was somewhat complicated but still, she lived a fulfilling life. Her everyday life was peaceful and calm.

That ended in the 3rd year of middle school. At the end of spring but just before summer truly began. While going to school, she was suddenly struck by a floating feeling. Suddenly, out of nowhere, her everyday life ended.

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For the [Grand Magus] Fuyou Aya, the person known as Yamada Renji was special.

The extraordinary life of being summoned into another world. She was able to handle it because she was together with her childhood friends Souichi and yayoi. If those 2 weren't here, she definitely would have been unable to handle it.

The existence of humans and non-humans. Living together with demi-humans and beastmen that only appeared in stories and legends, in a world infested by monsters. A world not of science but of sword and magic.

For men it was situation that would make them excited. Including Souichi, there were 7 men among the summoned 13. She remembers that 6 of them were so happy as if there was no problem with this.

But at that time, only one was being realistic. That was Yamada Renji. He worried about realistic things like how will the survive in this world, their position and status in this world and whether they'll be able to return or not.

Aya remembers that even now.

In fact he was extremely surprised and questioned the goddess many things about their future. Aya found that to be very mature of him.

Goddess. An existence called as Goddess Astrarea by the humans.

She told them that she wants them to save the world. To defeat the Demon God trying to destroy this world. For that reason, she could give them any power. For that reason, she would fulfil any of their wishes.

That's why, Aya wished. Since she was in another world now in any case, she wanted to use magic. She imagined the miracle like magic that only appeared in stories and legends. Magical energy that won't lose to anyone––not even the Demon God.

That wish was fulfilled and during the decisive battle she was able to do

a one on one magic battle with Demon God himself.

Souichi wished for a never losing power and Yayoi wished for a power to heal any wound.

Others as well wished for every power they wanted.

The last one to wish was Yamada Renji. He wished for [the weapon to kill Gods].

That was not to enjoy this world but the power to return back to their world. A power only for that reason.

In actuality, he did recieve the power to become undefeatable against any God. Not just the Demon God, Spirit God or the Goddess. But even against the descendants of the Demon God, Apostles of the Spirit God and priests of the Goddess. That power would work even against the followers of Gods.

For that, he was hated by many. Received the anger of many. And made many enemies as well.

A weapon useless against the monsters, nothing more than a normal weapon, Ermenhilde.

He protected countless with that weapon. That included Aya and the others as well.

He always said that it was impossible to save everyone but yet he was the one who tried to protect everyone the most.

When he was unable to protect someone/something, he would always hide his sadness. At night, in front of the campfire, he would often mourn for it. He was afraid of this other world more than anyone else. Aya realized that half a year later after coming to this world.

One night she woke up and saw Renji, who was acting as the guard at night as usual, feeling down alone. He had even put away Ermenhilde in the custody of Yuuko.

He was an adult, but weak yet tried the hardest and always held the strongest sense of responsibility.

That was the impression Aya had of Renji. And that was not a wrong estimation either.

Yamada Renji always stood at the very front. Along with the jade coloured weapon Ermenhilde, he kept on fighting at the very front.

To protect magicians like Aya and others. To protect kids like Souichi and others. He always tried to not make others worry. So that everyone could sleep peacefully, he would always take up the night guard duty.

Before anyone knew, that became an obvious thing and everyone depended on him for that.

She could still remember his back.

She had become prideful, she had let her guard down. She thought it was obvious that she had won. At that moment, she had almost died.

Her opponent had been an Ogre like today. Overestimating her own abilities, she had gone off too far in the front while trying to kill it.

No matter how strong magic she could use, Aya and others were still human. They die when they are killed. (T/N:classic shirou :P) even if Yayoi could heal wounds, she couldn't bring the dead back to life.

There were magic to bring the dead back to life but there were too many constraints to that and above all it was a taboo.

That's why, it was over if you die. It was the same even for the holders of cheat given by the goddess.

That night, she had been so scared she was unable to sleep. Feeling lonely, there were times she had been unable to sleep before as well but that was the first time she had been unable to sleep due to the fear of death.

That's why, she talked to Renji that night. Renji had steeled himself from the very day he had come to this world. He had always been nervous. He understood better than anyone else that death was always by their side. That's why he was the first to move when Aya was in danger.

When she had thanked him for it, she remembers that he had smiled

happily at that.

That smile was dazzling, and happy that it was pointed at her, she started talking to Renji more after that. She took advice from him. About magic, about human relations, about herself.

Aya felt that it was due to Renji's personality that you could talk about everything to him. You call that he was simply easy to talk to but Renji would always look at Aya when talking. He would think about her when talking and would worry for her as well.

That, somehow gave the same sense of security that Souichi's parents gave to her.

Fuyou Aya doesn't have a father. At first, she might have expected paternal feelings from Renji.

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(Aya pov)

"How is it? It's not weird right?"

"It looks fine Aya-chan. It suits you. Don't worry."

How many times had I asked that?

As I confirmed it with Yayoi who had helped in dressing me, a tired voice came from her. Am I worrying too much?

In front of the mirror I once again checked my appearance.

It was just the uniform of the Magic Academy but I had combed and even put on some make up as well.

It should be normal for a girl of my age but for some reason I can't get used to it.

I had never put on makeup before because there was no one I wanted to show myself like that to.

Though it bothered me that Yayoi who was younger than me was more used to it. The makeup set that Yayoi brought into my not very big room feels very out of place.

“With this, even Renji-oniisan would be conquered?”(yayoi)

“……I doubt it. Yup. Not happening.”(aya)

Why did Renji-san appeared in the conversation there? I wondered but it can’t be helped.

Even now, I don’t know whether the emotions I have towards Renji-san is love, admiration or affection.

Whether I like him as a man, whether I admire him as the person who protected me so many times or do I simply love him as a fatherly figure, I don’t know.

But its a fact that the only person to whom I want to show myself with such makeup is Renji-san.

That’s why, for now, this is fine.

“Really? Renji-oniisan is loose with women so it’s not impossible you know?”

“That’s bad in its own way so its better that it doesn’t happen. Yeah.”

True, Renji-san is loose with women. Whenever he’s with pretty women of his own age or even with women slightly younger or older than him, he’d act loosely. I feel I have seen him like that many times.

Also, he even taught weird things to Souichi and other men in with us. He’s an adult yet very childish. But because he’s like that, we were always able to smile.

He made us smile even when we were in pain. After the journey ended, when I recalled the whole journey, I realized that he’d always do weird things to make us laugh again.

So that we don’t get nervous, so that we don’tbreak, he always supported us.

“Also, for him, I’m still just like a younger sister or a daughter.....something like that.”(aya)

Even inside me it’s vague whether Renji-san is an elder brother, a father or just a man.

I can’t really speak about others I guess. I sighed.

“Aya-chan, you’re really passive with Renji-oniisan.”

“Really?”

“With brother, you’d get close to him rudely and quickly start fighting after all.”

“That’s because Souichi is an idiot. If I don’t do that, he wouldn’t realize anything.”

No, he won’t realize even when I go that far.

That guy’s dense and a total blockhead. Even with the girls in our class, he talks with them only as a friend.

Even though they look up to him as a Hero, as the Brave, as a man. I have such a sinful childhood friend. Well, it’s my job to make him realize these things.

“But that’s good in its own way.”(yayoi)

“I wonder.....I have gone through troubles due to that as well. As his childhood friend.”

Just how much was I troubled due to his denseness.....just thinking about it makes me sigh. At first he had even misunderstood and tried to set me up with Renji-san as well.

The fact that he’s quick to act might be his good point but the fact that he takes the shortest way to complete it no matter what it is, is also his bad point.

“We should go to the restaurant now or we’ll be late.”(aya)

“Renji-oniisan as well, why does he have to go and do something like dealing with goblin corpses.”(yayoi)

I agree with that as well.

Renji-san is a hero. To the worl. And even to me as well.

Dealing with goblin corpses is the job for newbie adventurers I think. He should let them do it.

“But, the fact that he works hard even at such small things is……really amazing I think.”

No matter how great he became, he’s been the same from the very start.

When we had just been summoned to this world. When his cheat was considered weak and he became more of a burden.

To become stronger, he did everything he could. Fighting skills, way of swinging the sword, knowledge, he put his effort into many things.

At first I didn’t really notice that but thinking back now, he really was amazing.

We all had something we excelled at but Renji-san didn’t have one. He only specialised in fighting gods. Powerless against monsters. But he was still desperate to protect something. He says that he’s not a hero but he’s the greatest hero of all.

I wonder who said that ‘hero’ is not a noun but a verb.(T/N: It was Robert Downing Jr.)

It’s not a title, a hero is all about his actions.

A hero doesn’t call himself one, others proclaim him as one.

“We are also heroes, called as God Slayers but that’s just a title.”

Right now, we’re attending school as students.

Yuuko-san called as the [Sage], said that we’re still children and made us go to one.

But Renji-san threw away his title as a hero, threw away the famous sword given to him by the king, and is living only with Ermenhilde in his hands. And that’s really splendid.

We hold the title of heroes. Renji-san continues to go around saving

people. I feel that it's very like him to do that. He might say other things but in the end he'll always help. That's how Renji-san is like.

Between us and such a Renji-san, which one is the actual [hero]……i wonder.

"Aya-chan, you're always thinking of difficult things……"

"I wonder?"

"I'm just satisfied with the reason, 'Renji-oniisan is amazing'."

"……well, that's mostly what I think as well though."

But I want to explain that in more better words.

You'd think that way right? For the person you hold precious after all.

"Now then, let's go shall we?"(aya)

"Already? Isn't it still early?"(yayoi)

"I don't want to make them wait."

"Aya-chan, you're the type who'd devote yourself to the man you like, aren't you?"

"I wonder?'

I understand what Yayoi means to say but am I really like that……who knows?

I don't.

I don't really care about that either.

"That or the type that'd lead men around by a rope."(yayoi)

"…….isn't that completely opposite of what you said before?"(aya)

"Well, even I don't know which is the real Aya-chan."

Is that so? She laughed loudly.

Really, she puts up such a facade in front of others.

Even though she's like this in front of us, in front of the others in class, she's like a young noble lady who only speaks in polite speech.

“If you laugh like that, the number of fans of the [Saint] would decrease you know?”(aya)

“I don’t really care. I only heal those who are injured or wounded. It’d be tiresome if they made a sculpture or an idol out of me.”

“I agree on that. It’s really tiresome if you’d don’t have people with whom you can talk openly by your side.”

“Aya-chan has it easy. You have brother in your class. For me, my class is.....”

After that we talked about classes for some time then rememberred about Renji-san and finally left.

I made a final check at the mirror. Sprinkling a perfume slightly I checked the light scent. This isn’t indecent right?

When I asked that, Yayoi made a fed up face.

“It’d be nice if we can hear a lot from Renji-san.”(aya)

“Yeah.”

Just like before, we’d talk a lot with him.

Just like how we talked in front of that campfire. About me, about Renji-san, about the school, about his journey.

If we talk.....i wonder if I’ll get a bit more closer to him.

But—-

“I want to talk a lot.”

That person is definitely worried about today, I think.

4 deceased.

We heard of that as well.

We fought with monsters. Victims will emerge. When fighting against the demon god, we had seen many more people die. Tens, hundreds of people had died.

I don’t think we’ve grown numb to it. It’s a fact that our hearts ached at

those numbers. But, if you get trapped in just that, the next to die would be you yourself. Our body and our mind understands that. Even if there are deaths, we'll face forward. We have no choice but to do so. So that we don't die.

But Renji-san is definitely lamenting over it, I think. Just like that time in front of the campfire. He must be looking downwards.

Because that man wished to protect. But doesn't has the power to do so.

That's why, I must tell him.

What he protected today.

What he protected again.

Thank you very much.

Though you couldn't protect those 4, you protected a lot more.

Chapter 22: The GodSlayers (5)

At the restaurant……or rather, the dinner hall meant for the masses where Aya and others were waiting had very few other customers.

The number of wooden tables were many and were also well maintained. There was also a big piano but it wasn't being played right now so it was pretty quiet right now.

At the counter, a girl of the same age as Aya was taking orders and behind that counter, inside the kitchen, 2 adults, probably the girl's parents were making food.

The atmosphere felt very cosy and comfortable as we 4 sat around a table and looked through the menu. By the way, Aya sat in front of me and Souichi and Yayoi were on the sides.

"It's a restaurant with a pretty great atmosphere. Do you guys come here often?"(Renji) "Yeah. It's filled with students of our age in afternoon but the number of customers at night are scarce. Since we're quite famous, we come here quite a lot of time for dinner."

"It sure is tough being famous eh?"

"Also, the food here is really delicious. Quantity served is good as well."

[Houu.]

"No, why the hell are you getting amazed for? You don't even have a mouth."(renji) [Muu……]

But, I guess that makes sense. I moved my gaze towards the few customers here but they were all young. They're probably not even 20 yet.

It's probably because they don't serve much alcohol that its not popular with the night crowd. As I looked at the menu while listening to Souichi, I saw that only a few beverages were mentioned.

Even rural villages have 1 or 2 more than this. Thinking that this restaurant is probably aimed at minors—-students, it makes much more sense.

In this world, there's not really a age limit for drinking. As long as they drink moderately and don't cause trouble for others, anyone except small children are allowed to drink.

The fact there are no alcohol bottles behind the counter, or any place visible, they must be appealing towards the student crowd.

"But then, don't you have trouble going shopping normally as well?"(renji) "It's not that much of a problem, right?"(souichi)

"It's probably because brother doesn't really go shopping too much anyway....If you go to some big merchant's store, we do stand out."(yayoi) "Eh, really?"(souichi)

"Yeah....Souichi doesn't really care for his appearance and pretty much stays home all the time and only goes to small stores so you probably don't realize. Our faces are pretty famous."(aya) "……I see."(souichi)

"Souichi, don't you go to shopping with your girlfriend or someone?"(renji) "I don't have a girlfriend."

Saying that, he dropped his shoulders. And I could only feel surprised at that.

"Really?"(renji)

[Unlike Renji, he should be popular with women though.]

Ignoring Ermenhilde's words, I looked towards Aya and Yayoi-chan. Aya, somewhat vaguely and Yayoi with a happy expression, nodded.

So he really doesn't have one.

I looked at Souichi. Androgynous, if I have to change my words, his face is what you'd call pretty for men. His height is slightly shorter than boys his age but I doubt that should be a problem.

His personality is an easily likable one, he is skilled and strong. In my opinion he should be considered superior to others but is he lacking in some specs from this world's point of view?

Or maybe they think he's dating Aya? They're both GodSlayers after all. They both journeyed together and are of the same age. It wouldn't be

weird if there were some who thought like that.

Even I think that it would be a natural relationship for them.

The closeness of Souichi and Aya is very vague. Closer than normal friends but a little distant to be lovers. They both call each other childhood friends or close friends but I feel it's slightly different. And it's not like they aren't conscious of each other either.

Well, I have had neither any childhood friends nor such best friends so I don't know what's the correct answer.

"Since you're famous, do they get nervous while talking to you?"(renji) "Something like that. Since I am a hero, a God Slayer after all. The only ones that come to chat are girls from famous noble families whose names I don't even know."(souichi) "Isn't that fine? You'll get to live in luxury after all."

"Not really interested. I want to become an adventurer after graduating anyway."

Is that so? I looked at him.

"Just like Renji-niichan, I want to look around the world. With my own eyes."

"Well that sounds fun. But you shouldn't try to live like me exactly."

[Yeah, you shouldn't really. If you were to start living like that as well, Renji would probably get buried by Yuuko.]

"……That's a very plausible future, so really, please don't."

I shrugged my shoulders.

That kind of hand-to-mouth livelihood. Earning reward from the guild, eating and then sleeping. After collecting a bit of money, move to the next village.

'Freedom' sounds great but it's a life with no savings whatsoever. There are no guarantee what'll happen once I became old.

If Souichi actually was to copy that lifestyle, what would the mother-

like Utano-san do to me..... Just like Ermenhilde said, I'll get buried—it'd be nice if it would end with just that actually.

"Being an adventurer doesn't suit you, brother."(yayoi) "Right. For starters you lack that adult maturity and the awesomeness of an adventurer you need. It's over for an adventurer if you get underestimated you know?"(aya) "....thank you for your frank opinion, Yayoi, Aya."(souichi) [Awesomeness?]

What do you want to say? I lightly struck Ermenhilde inside my pocket. While I was doing that, Souichi was feeling down from the two's comments.

Since he looked amusing, we three started laughing.

"Now then, what should we eat? Have you three decided?"(renji) When I said that, all three said the names of the dish they wanted.

Leaving aside Aya, Yayoi-chan eats quite a lot. I was surprised. Probably because I didn't really have such an image of her when we travelled together. In fact I was worried that Aya wasn't eating much. Souichi, contrary to his looks, eats quite a lot but Aya also ate a lot .

"What happened, are you not feeling well?"(renji)

"Eh?"(aya)

"No well, didn't you eat more before?"

"Uu....."

When I said that, she hid her blushing face behind the menu. Ah, she's embarrassed, I finally realized.

I ended up saying something lacking delicacy. Deciding not to say anymore on the topic, I called the waiter to give our order.

Souichi and Yayoi's shoulders were trembling as they tried to conceal their laughter and then Souichi alone suddenly fell flat on the table. Probably, he was hit underneath the table by Aya.

[Children should eat more or you won't grow you know?}

“You should shut up for a bit.”(renji)

[….wha. Renji that’s rude.]

“Pfft.”

Ermenhilde, you’re the one that’s rude.

And Yayoi finally was unable to hold back and burst into laughter and then a small dull sound resounded. Probably, Souichi was kicked again since his body shivered for a moment.

I could only scratch my cheeks.

“Nostalgic, isn’t it?”

[That’s true.]

As expected, no matter what I say, this atmosphere is really fun to be in.

Souichi and Aya would cause ruckus, Yayoi would laugh looking at that. After coming to this world, we 13 were connected with a weird relationship. Even though they were strangers, they were ones we’d trust the most. Even though we are not connected by blood, we are like a family.

That’s why I felt—–that it was nostalgic.

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While eating, we talked about various things. Their school life, my travels, what we did in the past one year, what others were doing right now.

Before we realized, we had eaten everything and then ordered dessert.

As expected, the amount she ordered didn’t satisfy her since Aya ate quite a lot of dessert instead. Well, I’m not insensitive enough to actually point that out loud though. It was mature of me to act like I didn’t see anything, I think. Souichi who did point that out loud had to fall flat on the table again.

“Really, the beard doesn’t suit you.”(yayoi)

[So Yayoi thinks like that, what about Aya?]

“Eh, um…….well, yes.”

“I think it looks manly though.”(souichi)

And for some reason, the topic shifted to my stubble.

Is my beard really worth becoming a topic of conversation? Also, seeing Ermenhilde happy to get more comrades against me is also irritating.

And it seems my stubble is unpopular with both Aya and yayoi-chan. And remaining Souichi, I wonder if he realises that saying it like that changes the meaning behind the sentence quite a lot.

“When I’m in this sloppy look, I look like a normal adventurer so it works in my favour.”(renji) “Aa, I see. So it’s like a disguise.”

Not just that, it’s a pain to shave cleanly as well. This world doesn’t have things like shaving cream and shavers so you have to use a knife to do it. That’s very dangerous on its own. Many times I had ended up cutting my own cheek or neck instead.

When I started being cautious of that, shaving started feeling like it’s a pain and I ended up with this stubble instead. As a result I realized that I was started to be accepted as a normal adventurer.

[I think that he just finds shaving a pain though.]

It is correct. You really do know me well.

Well, I don’t intend to accept its true out loud though.

“Even I think of various things Ermenhilde.”(renji)

[I wonder how much of that is true…..or rather, it should be normal for a person to take care of his own personal appearance.]

“…….I can’t refute that.”

Aya and Yayoi didn’t like it after all, maybe I should shave properly from now on.

I still find it a pain but the feeling of not showing the children a sloppy me is greater. Since I have been living lazily for the past one year, maybe I should use this as a chance to better my own lifestyle or rather, at least my appearance. I started feeling like that while looking at the kids.

Is the effect of the energy of the youth? While taking to these 3, I also felt a bit more energetic.

"Well, I'll try to be more proactive."(renji)

"That's a 'will not do' flag isn't it?"

"Trust me a bit more, Aya."

"I, I do.... tr, trust you."

Was there something in this conversation to make her embarrassed?

As she averted her gaze and hid her face, I could only tilt my head in confusion. This time I really don't understand. Looks Souichi was the same since he made a puzzled face when I looked at him.

Yayoi-chan alone was grinning happily though.

"Why don't you try and grow a beard as well Souichi? You might look more manly."(renji) "Re, really?"

When I said that, the Brave-sama looked up at me happily. Will a beard even fit his androgynous face?.....On imagining, nope not possible. I averted my gaze from him. There's a limit to how much a beard can't suit a man's face.

If Souichi were to grow a beard, Utano-san won't just stop with me getting buried.

While thinking such things, I became slightly scared. That person really goes all out when she does something. Utano Yuuko-san is that kind of a person. They say a person's name often matches their nature but that's definitely not true. (T/N: Yuuko basically means gentle child) "It'll definitely not suit brother at all."(yayoi)

"Yup, definitely not."(aya)

[Souichi has a pretty face after all.]

And once again he was completely rejected.

Since I who came up with the idea thinks the same as well, I couldn't support him either. Sorry Souichi, also, Ermenhilde my partner, "pretty face" is not a compliment for a guy.

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After finishing our dinner, we left the diner. The scarlet moon was at the zenith which showed that it was quite late already.

As I breathed out, I realized that my breath was slightly warm.

It's not like I was feverish. But, maybe a little bit of the kids energy was shared with me. I felt like that.

Was it fun? Yeah, it was. I had fun.

Without thinking about anything stupid or useless, I simply chatted and ate with my comrades, with the kids.

I was reminded that it could be this much fun. The time where we don't have to think like a Brave or a Hero could be so calming, we were reminded of that once again.

"Did you eat to your heart's content?"

"Yes. I ate a lot."

"Then, it'd be nice if your height grew a little as well."

"Yes....."

Answering energetically, then soon answering in a small voice, I laughed at such a Souichi.

"Thank you very much Renji-oniisan for treating us."(yayoi) "As you'd expect, it'd be embarrassing to share the bill with kids after all."

"fufu."

“After graduating when you get a job….then I’ll have you guys treat me.”

“Sure.”

Yayoi-chan, as usual, sounded the most mature even though she was the youngest.

“……”

And Aya was silent while hanging her head.

She became like this soon after when I said that we should go back. Seriously this girl. I began to think.

“Oi Souichi.”

“Yes?”

Calling him, I threw Ermenhilde to him.

He panicked a bit due to my sudden action but did somehow catch it properly with his both hands.

Probably because he’s living at school now, he’s grown slightly relaxed/careless. Well, that should be normal though.

A life where you’re cautious 24/7 would break you sooner or later. That’s why, this is fine. For that reason, Utano-san sent these kids to school I think.

[What happened Renji?]

“I’ll be back after walking a bit with Aya. I’ll come with you guys properly to your dorms later so don’t worry.”

“As usual, that came out of nowhere Renji-niisan.”

“Don’t mind it, it’s usual right.”

Saying that, I started walking. Ermenhilde was saying something but I acted like I didn’t hear. On glancing back a little, Yayoi-chan was giving a thumbs up. What are you doing? I sighed.

“……”

“……”

Silence.

But there was no complaint against what I said suddenly either.

When I glanced at Aya walking beside me, she was looking properly forward like walking now.

Fuyou Aya. Childhood friends to the Amagi siblings and probably the greatest and strongest magician of this world.

I—cannot understand this girl. Why did she come to talk to me, what did she expect of me.

Back then, I had saved her quite a few times. From monsters, accidents, diseases. From back then, I feel like she has matured a lot.

Just one year. But it was enough for a girl to grow up a lot, I think. Her height has grown from being around my chest to coming close to my shoulders. Her hair has also grown longer and expression has also become more adult-like. Even though she laughs childishly when talking with Souichi, right now her expression is calm.

“Did you grow taller?”

“Only—a bit.”

The conversation ended.

I am good at continuing conversation with people but I think I suck at starting a conversation myself.

It’s different if I have an objective but like now when there’s no such objective in my mind I think I’d be satisfied with just walking around like this. I’d think there’s no really need for conversation.

Moving my gaze away from Aya, I looked up at the night sky while walking beside her.

“Your uniform really suits.”

“Thank you very much.”

It’s not like I had anything to talk about.

But I felt that Aya had something she wanted to say to me.

That's I waited patiently for Aya to talk . Care freely, while gazing at the night sky. The walk with no destination felt great.

People who live in this world sleep early. That's because they have nothing to do. The most they have for enjoyment is either alcohol and gambling. But even casinos exist only in the area where nobles live. And even that's not an actual legal one. Those who like such things might be awake till late but it'd be only us who'd take a walk at such a time.

There was no one around. A quiet time. Walking at such a time really felt great.

"Renji-san."

Aya's legs stopped.

I looked at her and our yes met.

"Are you sad?"(aya)

"Yeah."

Why? She doesn't ask that. There's no reason to ask a question to which you already know the answer.

Aya's talking about what happened during the day.

4 dead. And they were adventurers who fought with me. Lives I couldn't protect.

"I think I'm sad."

".....I, am not sad."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

Do you find such an Aya to be cold-hearted?

I don't. I can't. In fact I feel that it's better this way.

If someone of us 13 died, if someone close died,.....Aya would definitely cry.

But, she won't be sad from the death of 4 whose names or faces she

didn't even know. Even if those were men who stood on the same battlefield as her.

And that's normal. Because if you don't think like that, you'd be the one to die next. Yes, because we understand that a battlefield is that kind of a place.

They were not sensitive like the 18yr olds of our original world. But, it's something natural for this world. I'm sure Aya is worried of the fact that she doesn't feel anything even on someone's death.

"I was glad that Renji-san was alright.....I was very happy."

"Me as well. I was also happy that Aya—-Souichi and others were safe as well."

But I, at the same time, was also affected by the death of those 4. I had made sure to not show it either on my face or in my actions but I guess they realized it. Or maybe, I simply have not matured from one year ago.

It was as simple as that. It's my bad that I just can't be satisfied.——-I'm sure that if I stood on the battlefield right now, I'd probably get injured. Without any reason. I'm sure of it.

"Um—-"

Aya's voice resounded in the stillness of the night.

"Thank you for saving me."(aya)

"Don't mention it. I said it at that time as well but I promised you, didn't I? That if you were in danger I will save you."

I feel like it was a night like this that time as well. I don't remember properly, but it was a calm, still night. In front of the fire, I had promised her so.

That I'd protect the world's greatest and strongest magician.

"You remembered it. The promise."(aya)

"Well, it was an important promise after all."

I shrugged my shoulders.

I will protect my promises. That was normal, obvious. And so I, obviously, protected my promise, that's all.

"Renji-san is the same as always."(aya)

"I just don't want to break my promises. At least from my side."

It's difficult to keep promises. Even after coming to this world, I broke many of promises.

But, except for in extreme cases——I make sure to not break the promises I make.

Even if that promise is something very small. Even if that is an unbelievably precious promise.

The wind blew and gently made Aya's hair sway in the air. In the darkness of the night, under the light of street lamps shining from magical energy, a pale light non existent in our former world, shone her figure.

"nee, Renji-san."

18 yrs old.

But even so I felt some kind of charm in her expression.

"Thank you very much."

"Yeah."

"I was once again saved by you."

"—-that's true."

Though I couldn't protect those 4, I saved her life.

I'm sure that's what she wants to tell me. I'm minding the death of those 4 too much. Those words come because she's worried for me. Those words so were gentle, and warm that I ended up smiling naturally.

And then breathed a sigh. This won't do. I'm being worried for by a child. I fail as an adult. I ended up smiling wryly.

What did she think as she saw me like that, Aya smiled like a

mischievous child. It was not the fascinating smile like before, it was more of a smile that suited a girl her age.

“Don’t cry, alright?”(aya)

“I won’t.”

She started giggling.

I heard similar words at a very different place once. From a very different voice.

One year ago—-the place I last cried.

“Yeah, I promised Ermenhilde after all.”

That’s why, I won’t cry.

Even if my comrades die, no matter who dies, no matter what I lose.

—-because I promised so.

Chapter 23: The Heroes and thereafter

Finishing shaving with my iron knife, I washed my face. Looking at the mirror, my old man face was clean.

It's a face that doesn't give birth to any kind of emotion, a very normal face you can find anywhere.

"My face feels weird."

I mumbled but there was no reply. Oh right, I had left Ermenhilde in the custody of Souichi. I'm not really lonely but feeling this lack of something, I sighed.

Quickly changing my clothes, I left the room. While playing with my iron knife instead of my partner Ermenhilde, I quickly finished my meal on the first floor.

In this world, bread is the staple food. I wish I could eat rice once in a while as well. It's impossible though.

I'm not an expert in agriculture but I know that to grow rice you at least need seeds to plant. We had searched for it even during our journey but didn't find any at all. Maybe it doesn't even exist in this world. Or maybe they are simply referred to differently than just 'rice seed'.

While thinking that, I put a the freshly baked bread, the vegetable stew and a slice of ham in my mouth. It's pretty heavy for breakfast but this is normal for this world. In turn they spend those calories while farming and other jobs. The people in bureaucratic jobs or nobles tend to be fatter as a result. It must be due to this kind of diet, I think.

While taking water from the landlady, I started thinking about how to spend the day.

Should I go to Souichi and other's dorms to get Ermenhilde now or should I wait and spend time gathering herbs till their classes end.

".....For the time being, let's go to the guild."

I only had to think about that for a moment.

The deciding factor was that the guild was closer than the dorms. I definitely wasn't thinking of something like enjoying my time while the noisy sister-in-law like Ermenhilde is not with me.

As I decided, I left the inn after finishing my meal.

I should move away from this place pretty soon as well, I thought while walking. I met Souichi and others and was able to talk to them like before as well.....I think.

Now that I have completed my objective here, I should travel to my next destination—the royal capital to meet my comrades there and talk to them about these descendants of the Demon God.

My wallet has become pretty filled as well after all.

While thinking that, I reached the guild while swiftly avoiding the way of people leaving for their work.

"Ah, I'm tired....."

While sighing like that, I opened the guild's door. The double swing door made a noise in the lobby as I entered.....and for some reason everyone's gaze gathered at me.

No, well, I do know the reason. It's because I overdid it against the goblins. With the jade sword Ermenhilde in my hands, I fought together with Souichi and others. My identity is probably known by them.

While ignoring the uncomfortable gazes, I took a memo from the request counter. While doing that, my hand touched the girl's hand beside me.

"oh, sorry."

"Ah, don't worry."

We both apologised and looked at each other. I recognised this girl's face.

"Oh, well if it isn't Miss Francesca."

"Ah, Renji-sama."

“.....please stop with ‘-sama’ suffix really.”

Saying that, I gave a sigh.

Transparent honey coloured hair, green eyes. Since she was in her school uniform right now, her plentiful chest non-existent with Aya or Yayoi-chan was a feast for eyes.

Her white blouse stuck out contrary to her own personality and the golden embroidered blue robe only made it’s presence more prominent.

“How come you’re here?

“No, well.....”

She’s being unusually unclear.

Going by the fact that we went for the same memo, I guess she’s also after the herb gathering quest.

“Gathering materials for magic or alchemy?”

“Ah, eh? Why.....”

“Well, you were trying to take a herb gathering quest after all. Was I wrong?”

When I swung the memo in front of her, she finally realized as well.

Well, anyone could do that much, I whispered to myself.

“Well, you’re just in time.”

“Yes?”

“I want to contact Souichi but———”

While I was speaking, it became slightly noisy inside the guild.

When I looked to see what was going on, Souichi and Yayoi in the same uniform as Miss Francesca—-the Albana academy uniform, entered the guild.

“Oh.”

“Ah.”

We both raised our voices at the same time. It seems I'm lucky today, I thought that to myself as I raised my hand.

"Yo. What happened? Why here?"(renji)

"We came to look for Renji-niichan. Here."(souichi)

[.....]

"Oh, thanks."

Taking back Ermenhilde from him, I put it back inside my pocket.

"As expected."

"Hm?"

"The beard. You look cooler without it."

"Well thanks."

I can't really be honestly happy at that.

Did it really not suit me that much? I actually liked it a bit. As if to once again check the now non-existent beard, I ended up rubbing my chin with my hand.

"Leaving that aside, Renji-niichan, I waited for quite a while yesterday you know?"

".....that was my bad. After dropping off Aya home, I just returned back."

[To the bar again?]

"....."

[Rather than taking me back.....you went to a bar.]

"It's fine right, once in a while? There are times when I feel like drinking alone as well."

"[hou.]

It seems I have angered it quite a bit.

What should I do, I started thinking. Well, it's mood will get better soon

enough though. If it kept on sulking like that, I'd start feeling bad as well. Well, it was actually my fault though.

Well I feel like being alone sometimes as well so it should be fine, right? It would be fine in villages but if I let Ermenhilde alone somewhere in an inn like that with so many people, I afraid it would get stolen instantly.

Yesterday, since I gave it to Souichi coincidentally, I just went to the bar.....maybe because I felt a bit too relaxed after talking to Aya.

While giving excuses inside my head, I thought about how to improve its mood.

"Did you guys come just to give Ermenhilde back only?"(renji) The noise of the adventurers around us was getting irritating.

This is why I hate being famous. No matter where you go you become the centre of attention. You can't even talk while standing somewhere normally.

"I'll come back after accepting a request so can you wait for a bit?"

"Sure, I'll be over there."

Saying that, I pushed through the adventurers surrounding us and left there. Ah, irritating. I'll have to go seclude myself in some rural village again.

[You adulterer.]

"Where the hell are you learning these words?....."

Who the hell was it that taught it these words? Souichi doesn't seem like he'd say such thing. Was it either Aya or Yayoi-chan?

I can't really imagine either of them doing so but it should be one of them.

[Anyway, Renji.]

"Your attitude changed suddenly.....so, what is it?"

[They seem to have decided to send the captured demon to the Royal Capital.]

“Well, sounds obvious.”

[.....You aren’t surprised by that?]

Anyone would get to that conclusion if he were to think even a bit.

The royal capital has 4 knight orders that specialise against monsters, even demons. It’s natural to give something troublesome like a demon to their hands. Those idiots at Strategy(tactics) city would probably get all riled up saying that demons have attacked, so its time to get revenge but the guys in Magic city are slow to act so would definitely hand over something troublesome like this to others.

“And the ones meant to escort it to the capital are Souichi and others, right?”

[Muu, you’re no fun Renji.]

“It’s a serious thing like a demon after all. They’d obviously make them move to be absolutely sure.”

And that demon used summoning skills. Goblins—-and he also summoned that black ogre.

It would be one thing if it was just goblins but that black ogre would be too much for normal adventurers. Well I doubt that demon would be able to summon monsters like that so easily either though. Rather than that, if Souichi and others are going to the capital, I can also stick with those guys. If they’re transporting a demon, it’ll probably be carried in a carriage with barriers set around it. Then the escort will also be either on horses or in a carriage.

If I go with these guys, the travel would also be easier for me. If I were to walk, it’d take at least 20 days to get to the capital. It’ll take half the time in a carriage.

While gazing at the crowd of people going by in front of the guild, I thought about what could be done. If I couldn’t go with them, I’ll just have to walk though. That or I’ll have to take the escort quest from the guild.

“Ah, Renji-sama.”

“I don’t think I have become great enough to need a ‘-sama’ suffix but, what is it Miss Francesca?”

While I was thinking such things, Miss Francesca came out.

I sighed at the usual call of ‘-sama’. I just defeated a few goblins and one ogre in that fight. Aya, who took doubt countless goblins with just one magic spell is more worthy of being called like that in my opinion. Well, it’s her freedom how she calls anybody.

“So, did you take a request?”

“Yes. To collect materials for alchemy at the Forest of Magical Energy.”

“Hmmm.”

Rather than the request itself, I’m more worried about her getting lost while in the forest.

She did fight Orcs with me back then but somehow she still gives this unreliable, dangerous image. Just like a noble, she has that atmosphere.

“Are you alone?”

“No. I hired a guide just now.”

“Then it should be fine.”

For the time being, she should at least not get lost inside the forest now. Probably.

As long as that guide is not someone who does something weird. While I was thinking that, another one left the guild.

Gold hair and pointed ears. His sour looking face that I’d become used to seeing still looked handsome.

“Yo.”(renji)

“mu, You are.....”(T/N: Elf guy uses ‘anata-sama’ here for ‘you’ which is very honorific than normal) His way of speaking changed.

I could only drop my shoulders at that and sigh.

“Please talk like usual. Frankly, the curious gazes alone are killing me already.”(renji) “Fu……I thought you’d be laughing inside while hiding your true identity. So you just find it a pain, eh.”(elf) “Obviously. Trouble is the nemesis of free journeys.”

[Without money, even that’s just a pipe dream though.]

” You sure say some dreamless things.”(renji)

Saying that, I flicked Ermenhilde in the air with my thumb.

As it twirled in the air, I caught it. On opening my hand, it was Heads. Yeah. I have good luck.

“Oh right what happened to your exam?”(renji)

“Ah, yes, I hadn’t told you…..very sorry.”(fran)

“No, no need to apologise. Well, it’s good you passed.”

“Yes…..though, I’ll be troubling you once again I think though.”(fran) Huh? Why would you cause trouble now? I tilted my head in confusion.

In the first place, the Orc hunting helped me in earning a lot so it wasn’t really troublesome for me either.

When I was about to say that, Souichi and Yayoi appeared from the guild as well.

“Sorry to have made you wait.”(yayoi)

“Sorry, Renji-niichan.”

“Nah, it’s fine. I haven’t taken any request anyway.”

[If I hadn’t come, you were thinking of taking it easy again weren’t you?]

“No way. I woke today with the will to work Ermenhilde. Look, I even shaved.”

[That’s nothing special.]

As usual, my partner continues nagging me.

As I shrugged, Souichi and Yayoi started laughing. Miss Francesca and

others can't hear Ermenhilde so they were making a confused face.

"Did you guys also accept a request?"(renji)

"Nope, we were giving out one."

"I see. The escorting of the demon to the capital eh?"

When I said that, they both got very surprised.

"Ah, did Eru-san tell you?"

[Yeah but I couldn't surprise him.....boring.]

"What kind of expectations do you have of me?"

Saying that I put the medal back inside my pocket.

"Maybe I should also take up some request....."

.

.

.

Now how did it end up like this? I tilted my head in confusion.

Since I had finally met her again I decided to take the same quest as Miss Francesca to gather herbs but for some reason, Souichi and Yayoi-chan are also together with us. When I asked if it'd be fine with the school, the answered 'yes' with a smile. It was a smile I couldn't really trust though. Especially Souichi's. Later on, I'll make sure to ask either Aya or Yayoi-chan about his grades at school.

But still, with this over powered force with us, I started feeling sad for the goblins we occasionally met.

After all, those goblins get torn apart along with their weapons and armor altogether. As expected of the Brave who has already defeated the last boss. As expected of the one who, in a sense, has the strongest cheat.

He also held the holy sword with a faint blue magical energy in his hands. Along with the cheat abilities, let alone me, not even the Elf guy got any chance to do something before the battle ended. It didn't matter

whether our opponent was just one or many.

For the time being, we left the fighting completely to Souichi. That was more effective than us doing it after all.

“.....this is the power of a Hero, eh?”(elf)

“Don’t put me in the same category, okay? I don’t even have half the strength Souichi has.”(renji) “Again saying things like that.....”(yayoi)

It’s true though. I shrugged my shoulders at Yayoi-chan’s words.

In truth, though I have never fought against Souichi, I’m sure I’d lose against him in a one-on-one battle. Even if all 7 of Ermenhilde’s covenants were released, I won’t be able to beat him.

I can only bring out my full strength against the Demon God but Souichi, as long as his will is not broken, can use his full strength against anyone.

His cheat is an extraordinary one even among us 13. Because he’s called a Brave, Souichi is that strong. Because he himself wishes to be and live like that.

Though I think it’d be better if he’d just live like a kid his age rather than with some heavy title like that. But he’s free to live as he likes. If he himself wishes it, I won’t go against it.

“I think Renji-sama is also strong enough to not lose against Souichi-sama though?”(fran) “No way. If I was fighting alone on the front like that, I can at most take on 2 goblins at the same time.”

If I could ambush them, maybe I could take a few more but I can’t charge head-on and unmatched like Souichi does. In the first place, it’s weird to go and fight monsters alone.

[Renji, I want to cut something too.]

“Why did you say something so violent out of nowhere?”

“??”

Please don’t give into your instincts. It’s troubleome.

Also, since she couldn't hear Ermenhilde's voice, Miss Francesca looked cute as she tilted her head in confusion as I talked to myself.

"By the way, Aya wasn't with you guys?"(renji)

"Aya-chan had classes.....of right, Renji-oniisan."(yayoi)

"Hm?"

I always treat Souichi and Aya as a set so it simply felt unusual for them to not be together which is why I asked. But for some reason, Yayoi-chan suddenly asked in a somewhat angry manner. Did I do something? I tried to remember yesterday but couldn't find any problem.

"Aya-chan was in an extremely good mood but, did you say something to her?"(yayoi) "Well, we just chatted idly though."(renji)

"fuuun"

Clearly she doesn't believe me.

But well, it really was like that. We did just talked about the past and also, I made her worry about me and that's it.

[So, after dropping Aya off at her dorm, you nonchalantly went to a bar, eh?]

Don't hold a grudge for that.

There had been times when I left Ermenhilde in my room and went drinking alone while we 2 travelled as well. I don't think it's that unusual.

"Aya-sama did seem to be in a good mood from early morning."(fran) "fuun, by the way, what kind of 'good mood' was she in?"(renji) "Skipping around, and humming etc, basically."(fran)

That's it?

"Aya's usually like that whenever she is even slightly happy."

[umu. She's a cute one after all.]

Leaving aside whether that's cute or not, during our journey she'd be like that whenever something good happened I think.

On improving her magic or finding a rare item etc.

Was it really as special as Miss francesca or Yayoi-chan say?

“waa.”(yayoi)

“Nothing happened that should make you sigh nor did I do anything like that you know?”(renji) Saying that, I kneeled on the ground. I found some the herbs we were looking for. It’s still far from the amount needed to finish our job but it’s still important spirit grass. I carefully plucked it out.

“A crime of conscience is it? Renji-oniisan.”(yayoi)

“Well, for a man like me, I don’t understand even a fragment of a woman’s heart.”(renji) “Hm? What are you guys talking about?”(souichi)

After defeating all the goblins and still not being even short on breath, Souichi came back. Behind him was the Elf guy with bow in his hands. Seeing two handsome men walk together sure is picturesque.

“We’re talking about how men can’t understand the heart of women.”

“Ah, true, Aya gets angry at me a lot for the same reason.”(souichi) “What kind of conversation are you guys having while in between completing a request?”(elf) [Seriously.]

The serious Elf and Ermenhilde seemed to be amazed at us. He even shrugged his shoulders and sighed. In his hands was Spirit grass multiple times more than mine. He really is one serious guy.

“Since it’s Brother, it can’t be helped.”(yayoi)

“.....That’s very hurting to hear on its own you know?”(souichi) Well, it is Souichi we’re talking about. He’s the type that always gets too close. So much that you have to push him away a bit.

Although its nice to be honest to what you’re thinking, but it’s troublesome if you’re too honest. Though he seems to have matured a bit from that.

“It’s fine. Brother, you have me after all.”(yayoi)

“Well what can I do with that……”(souichi)

“……”

Really, Souichi has no understanding of women at all.

Well, Yayoi-chan is unique on her own as well though. It seems as usual, someone will have to tell them to be relieved and stuff. (T/N: I kinda took liberty with this sentence since the actual line makes no real sense in english. It’s weird in jap as well tho. Just ignore. Not really important) I’ll leave these things to Utano-san. She’s a woman as well after all. I have no idea what I should say after all.

“You two really do get along.”(renji)

“Yes!”(yayoi)

“Really?(souichi)

When Souichi said that, Yayoi-chan’s smile cramped. Miss Francesca was also giving a troubled smile.

What is this? Though I had been talking till now as well but somehow this feels more like a picnic instead.

Though the main reason is Souichi being here. After all, there’s no danger. Goblins aren’t even a danger anymore. Other wild beasts also stay away due to the Holy Sword’s aura.

While collecting Spirit Grass with the Elf, I sighed. It’s good to be living like children. Yeah.

“Say, during the journey for the Demon God’s subjugation..”(elf) “Hm?

On Elf guy’s question, I nodded him to continue after a second.

“Were you guys like this even that time?”

“Ahh.”

No matter how low the danger on this request may be, this kind of carefree atmosphere was not normal.

In the first place, it was weird to be carefree even while goblins come attacking.

“No. That time, we didn’t have such leisure.”(renji)

I remembered the journey which was painful, agonizing and made me cry so many times.

Now, it only feels nostalgic––it has become a precious memory of mine.

“That makes me relieved.”(elf)

“Relieved?”(renji)

When I questioned, this time the Elf shrugged his shoulders.

“If you said that you travelled with this mood and had killed the Demon God.....I would have been at a loss for words.”

“Well, that’s true.”

At that time, we were at our limits every day. We had never done such journeys, we weren’t even used to walking for long times.

After being summoned to this world, we were trained by the Knight Orders and were entrusted with the hopes and expectations of everyone.

“But, it’s fine now.”(renji)

“Is that how it is?”(elf)

“To laugh happily, for such a world, we had worked so hard after all.”

After saying, even I felt that it was a foolish line to say. If my former comrades were here, they’d all say that it doesn’t suit me saying that at all. I realise that.

I know that there are still many that still cannot laugh.

There are too many orphans in this world. Too many who have lost their loved ones. We saved the world but there are still people that have not been saved yet. But still.

“––I see.”(elf)

[umu. That’s right.]

On Ermenhilde’s words, I started laughing.

Yeah, that’s right. That’s exactly how it is.

Right now, at this moment, finally, I felt that it was great that I came to Magic City. I was glad to have met Souichi and others. I felt that from the bottom of my heart.

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